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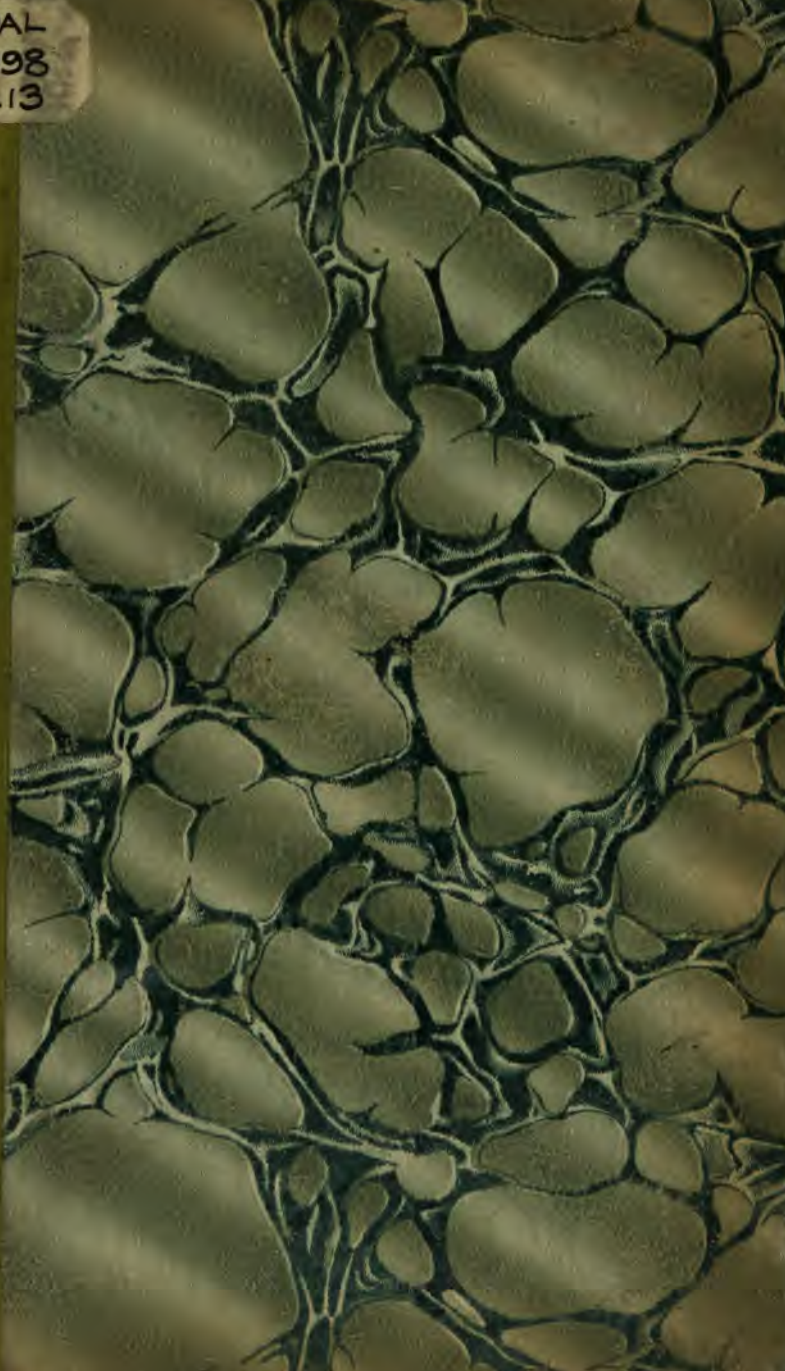
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Ryley - An American citizen

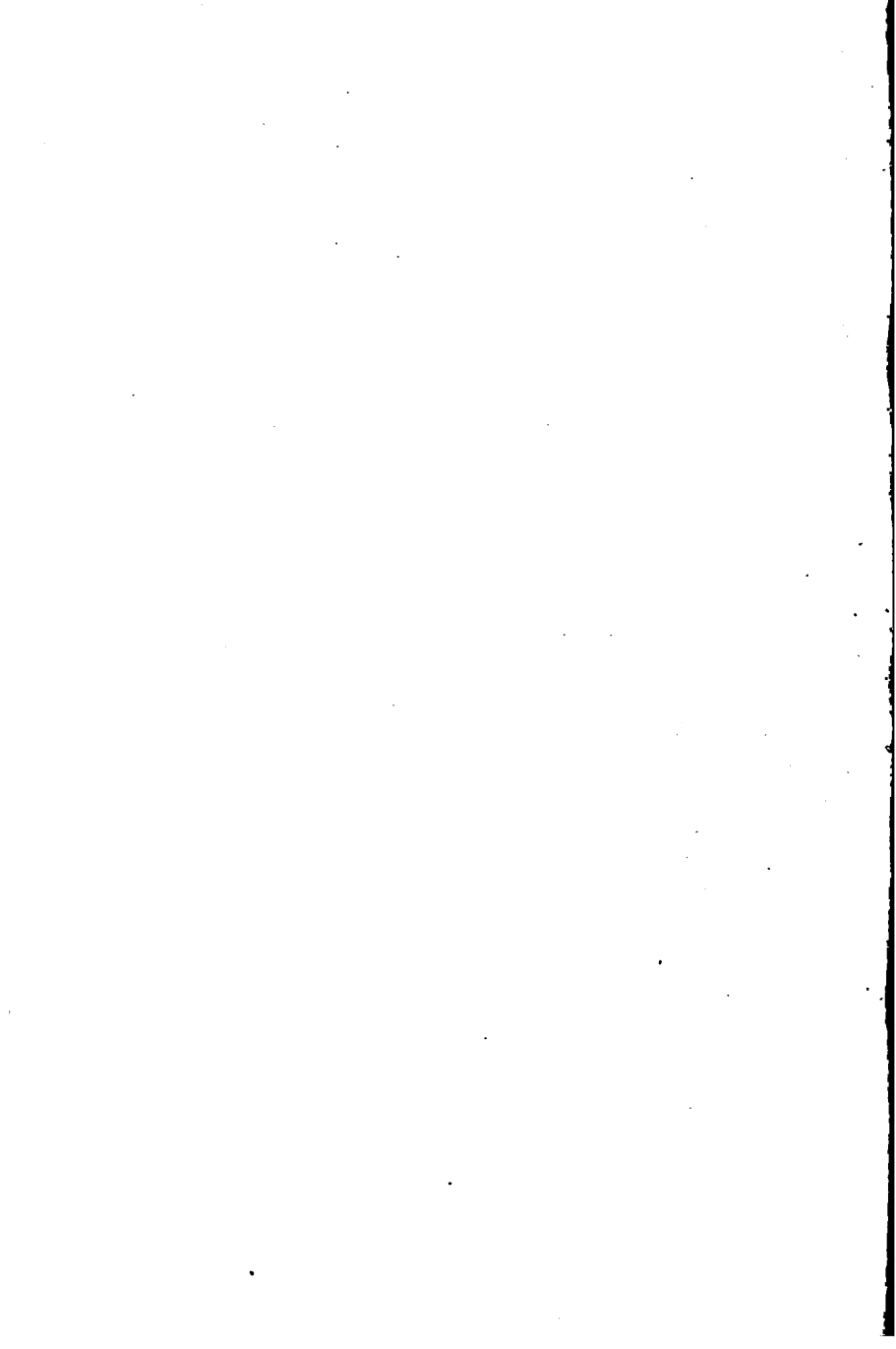
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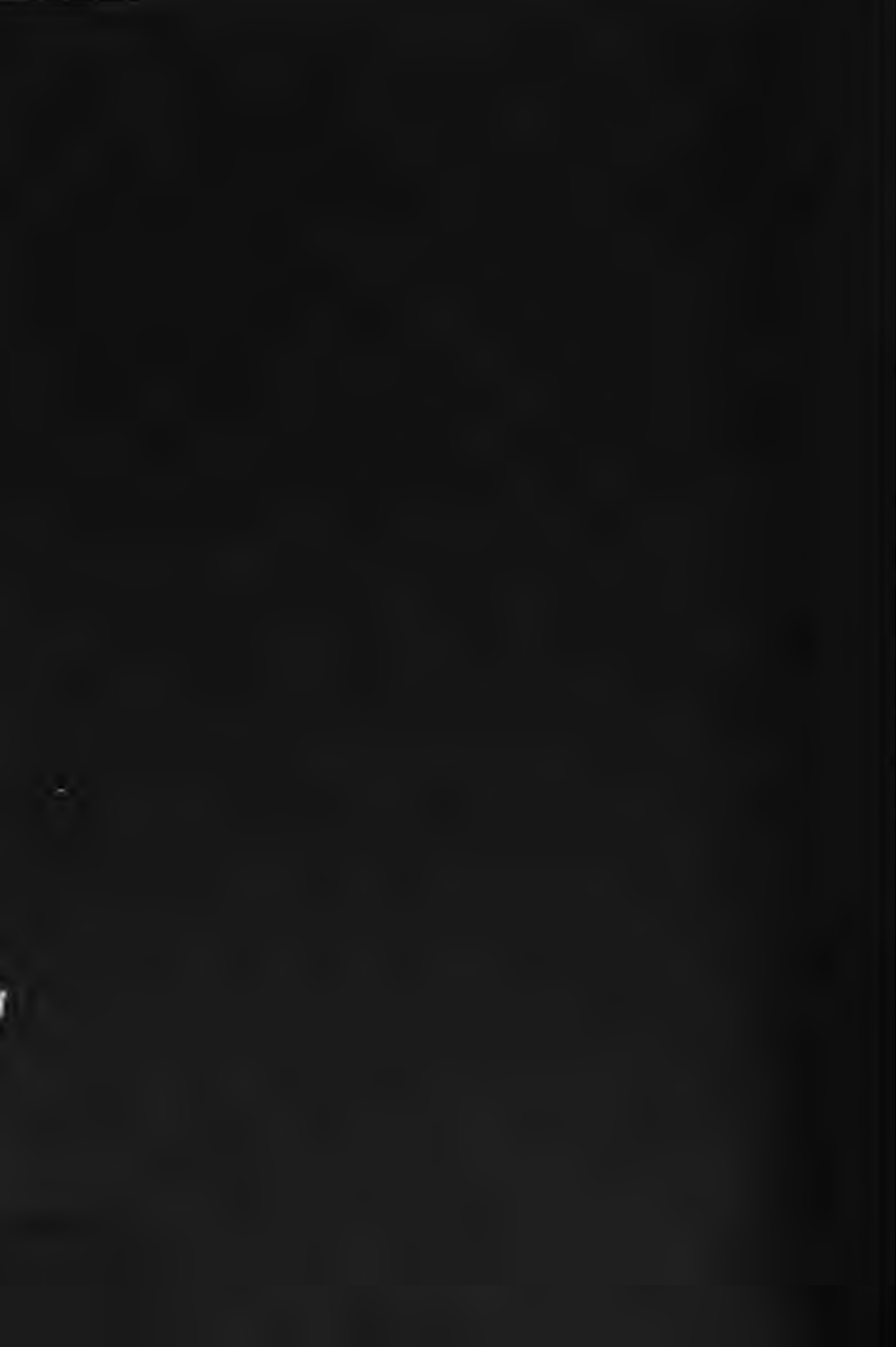
An American Citizen

BY

MADELEINE LUCETTE RYLEY



SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th St., New Y



AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS.

BY

MADELEINE LUCETTE RYLEY.

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AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.

(Produced at the Duke of York's Theatre, June 19th, 1899).

CHARACTERS.

Beresford Cruger (<i>afterwards</i> <i>called Carew</i>)	...	...	MR. N. O. GOODWIN.
Peter Barbury	...	...	MR. T. OBERLE.
Egerton Brown	...	...	MR. BYRON DOUGLAS.
Sir Humphrey Bunn...	...	...	MR. CLARENCE HANDYSIDES
Willie Bunn	...	...	MR. H. V. SURREY.
Otto Stroble	...	...	MR. FRANK MAYNE.
Lucas	...	...	MR. S. M. HALL.
Simms	...	...	MR. NEIL O'BRIEN.
Carola Chapin	...	...	MISS ESTELLE MORTIMER.
Lady Bunn	...	...	MISS ISOBEL HASKINS.
Georgia Chapin	...	...	MISS GERTRUDE ELLIOTT.
Annette	...	...	MISS LEMAIRE.
Mercury	...	...	MASTER GORDON DOUGLAS.
Beatrice Carew	...	...	MISS MAXINE ELLIOTT.

ACT I.

Offices of Barbury, Brown, and Cruger, New York.

ACT II.

On the Riviera. Confetti Day during the Flower Carnival.
(One year later.)

ACT III.

Drawing Room in the Hotel Grande Bretagne, Nice.
(Evening of same day.)

ACT IV.

Cruger's Lodgings and Office near London.
(Eight months later.)

TIME—The Present.

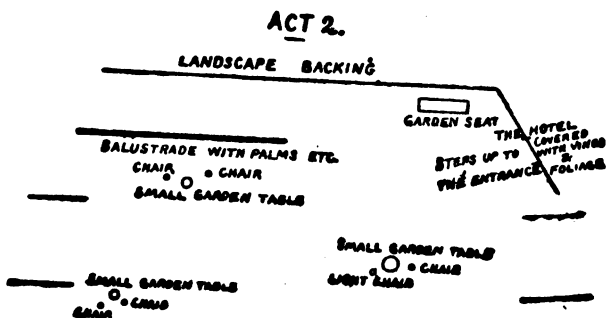
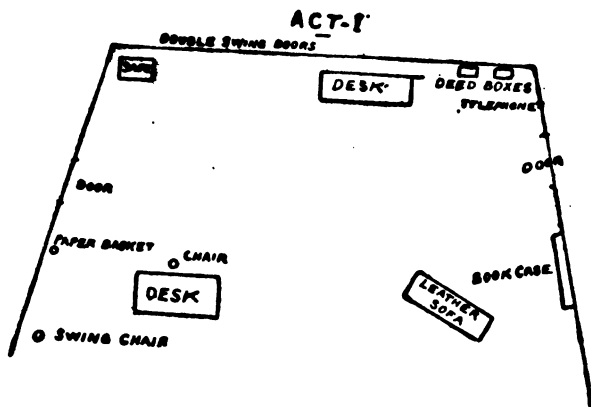
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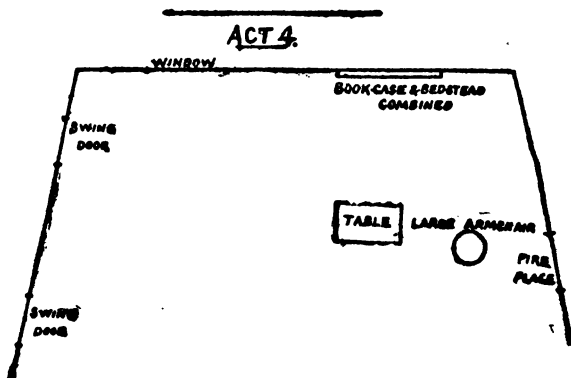
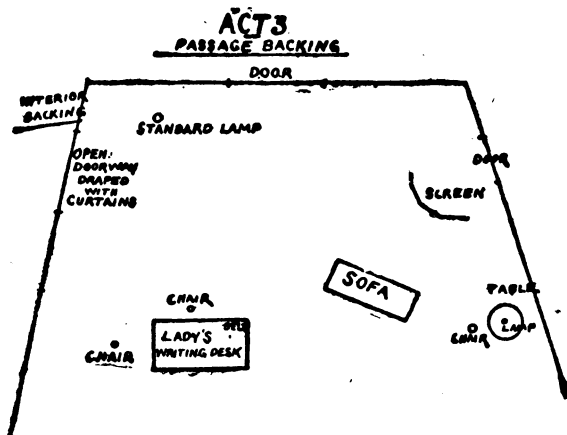
ROBERT GOULD SHAW

APR 28 1926

AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.



AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.



AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Law offices of Barbury, Brown, and Cruger; doors lower R., R.C., and L.; desk at R.C., open and empty; deed boxes on top, marked "Chapin"; desk near C., with papers, etc., very orderly; desk lower R., quite the reverse; paper basket, swing chairs, bookcase, etc.; leather sofa down L., safe at upper R., telephone near door L.C.; as curtain rises PETER BARBURY is discovered at safe examining papers; he is a quietly dressed, methodical man of 40; his manner indicates that his hearing is slightly defective.*

LUCAS, the clerk, enters L. with newspapers, which he places on desk C.

BAR. (turning) Not on there, Lucas. I will not have my desk encumbered with papers.

LUCAS. Mr. Cruger sent me for them, sir.

BAR. Then put them on Mr. Cruger's desk. (**LUCAS** removes them to desk lower R.)

LUCAS. (going R.) Mr. Stroble is outside, sir.

BAR. Ask him to step in. (exit **LUCAS**)

Enter OTTO STROBLE; he is about 30, exhibits an abundance of animal spirits, and speaks with a slight German accent.

STRO. Say, Barbury, do you want an investment?

BAR. Eh? What?

STRO. An investment. But I forget. What news of Brown?

BAR. (coming down R.C. with letter and sheet of paper) Nothing further. We broke open his desk last night. (points to desk R.) This is all we found. (glances over sheet of paper and reads) "To my partners, Peter Barbury and Beresford Cruger. When you find this, my body will be at the bottom of the Atlantic. There is no one but myself to blame.—EGERTON BROWN."

STRO. Do you believe he has committed suicide?

BAR. (indicating letter) This is all the evidence we have. He probably sailed under an assumed name, so we shall scarcely establish direct proof. (sadly) But we fear it's only too true. (goes up to his own desk)

STRO. (*trying to look mournful*) Such a good fellow too. Did you find no motive—nothing at his rooms?

BAR. Cruger has gone up there now.

STRO. How long is it that Brown has been trustee for Miss Georgia Chapin and her Aunt Carola?

BAR. Since Georgia's father died. About two years. But why?

STRO. Well, Brown was this week to render his account, and the Aunt, Carola Chapin, she fears something may be crooked with their estate.

BAR. (*coming down*) Eh? Stroble, I wouldn't mention Miss Carola's suspicions. We don't want anything of that kind to get into the papers. (*takes sheet of paper to Cruger's desk and remains there*)

STRO. Of course, of course. Such a good fellow too. Say, Barbury, you want a safe investment? (*louder*) I say, a safe investment? (*crosses to BARBURY*)

BAR. (*turning*) Don't shout. I can never hear people who shout.

STRO. (*producing map and plans, and laying them on desk* o.) Twenty-five thousand acres in Wyoming, all ready for—

BAR. (*going up quickly*) I must beg you not to put Wyoming on my desk.

STRO. It is colossal! (*BARBURY shakes his head*) I make a syndicate with myself to buy one half, and let you buy the other. Wait—I go in your room and mark off the City of Carbon Centre. (*goes R., taking plan*)

BAR. There's a city, is there?

STRO. Not yet, but by-and-bye, when the boom comes—

Enter BERESFORD CRUGER L.; he throws his hat on to sofa.

CRU. Hallo, Otto. (*goes to his desk*)

STRO. (*at door R.*) Say, Cruger, you want an investment? The chance of your life. We buy and wait for the boom. (*exit R.*)

CRU. (*looking after him gloomily*) I've got all the booms I want at present.

BAR. (*coming down o.*) What is the outlook?

CRU. (*looks R. cautiously*) Queer, I'm afraid.

BAR. The Chapin's bonds?

CRU. Don't appear to exist. (*a pause*) We've one more hope—(*rises and crosses to L.*) the Safe Deposit Vaults. I've arranged to be there at twelve. This thing has knocked me higher than two kites. Poor chap! Why couldn't he have taken us into his confidence? (*crosses back to R.*) Peter, I would have staked my life on Brown's honesty. I feel somehow responsible for him. Why, it was I who brought him

into the firm. It was I who introduced him to the Chapins.

BAR. The Aunt is beginning to show some anxiety.

CRU. (*at desk R.*) Auntie must be quieted. I'm pinning my faith to the Safe Deposit Vaults. (*telephone bell rings*) I guess that's another reporter. I've been telling them that Brown was crossed in love. We've got to put them off the scent somehow.

BAR. (*at telephone*) The Waldorf, yes. Yes, Mr. Cruger is here. What name? A little louder, please. Bunn? Sir Humphrey Bunn?

CRU. Great Scott! What the devil is he doing on this side?

BAR. (*through the telephone*) He wants to know what the devil—

CRU. (*springing up and going to telephone*) Here, hold on. (*takes receiver*) Yes, I am Mr. Cruger. You'll call when? This morning? Oh, damn it—did you get that? Yes, I'll be here. Good-bye. (*puts up receiver and comes down*)

BAR. (*sorting papers at his own desk*) Who is it?

CRU. (*at his desk*) My uncle's executor.

BAR. (*turning round*) Uncle! Ah, the late Sir John Carew.

CRU. Yes. Vicious old brute. Cut my mother dead, because she married a Yank and came to America.

BAR. But didn't he bequeath you a fortune?

CRU. Yes, with a string to it. One of the first conditions of my inheritance was that I should renounce my nationality.

BAR. And you refused. Who says the patriots are all dead?

CRU. It wasn't patriotism, Peter. I am just as fond of the dollar as the majority of my countrymen.

BAR. Had he no other relative to leave it to?

CRU. Oh yes. A daughter named Beatrice, I think. She did something to offend him, and cutting her out of his will was part of his playfulness.

Enter LUCAS L.

LUCAS. (*announcing*) Miss Chapin.

CRU. Which one?

Enter GEORGE CHAPIN L.; *exit* LUCAS; GEORGIA *nods to* BARBURY, *then comes quickly down to* CRUGER.

GEO. Georgia, of course. We don't want any more suicides in the firm, so I thought I'd better come round and smile upon you. (*shaking hands*) Don't kiss me, because the black comes off my veil. Poor old Brownie. Aunt Carola is awfully upset. By the way, she is coming to see you this

morning. I thought I'd come and warn you. One needs a deal of preparation for Auntie, especially when she has set her mature affections on one. (*leans over his chair ; CRUGER, who has been writing, looks up*)

CRU. Have you any reason to suppose she was fond of Brown?

GEO. I don't know. Why?

CRU. I was trying to find a motive for his suicide.

GEO. (*turns away, laughing*) What helpless mortals you men are. You all get into trouble if you're left alone. As for you (*approaches him*) I shall have to let you marry me. (*sighs*) That will be the end of it.

CRU. (*kissing her hand*) Never. I'm much too fond of you. (*noise off R.*)

GEO. What's that?

CRU. (*springing up*) I guess Otto's boom has arrived. (*exit R. ; she looks after him pensively*)

BAR. (*approaching her*) You are not crying?

GEO. (*still looking after CRUGER*) No ; I never cry. I just feel, that is all.

BAR. (*sentimentally*) Ah, an acute sensibility is little understood. If it weren't for my affliction— (*touching his ear*)

GEO. (*jocularly*) Oh, I wouldn't let a little thing like that stand in the way. You're not really deaf, you know.

BAR. (*taking her hand*) Never, when you are speaking. Yours is the one voice that penetrates my gloom like a strain—

Enter CRUGER.

CRU. (*seeing BARBURY*) Here, Peter, Peter, that'll do. (*BARBURY drops her hand and moves up*)

GEO. (*to CRUGER, laughingly*) You really shouldn't desert the unprotected. (*points to herself*)

CRU. (*pointing to BARBURY*) What, Peter? He's all right. It is only his sympathetic nature. (*BARBURY takes some papers and goes off R.*)

GEO. (*looking after him*) Dear old thing. What do you suppose would happen if a woman were once to take him seriously?

CRU. He'd drop dead.

Enter STROBLE from R. ; he carries his plan, which he waves excitedly.

STRO. See here, Cruger ! It is finished.

CRU. Don't you see Miss Chapin?

STRO. (*turning*) Excuse me. How do you do? (*turns*

again to CRUGER) Here is the proposed City of Carbon Centre. Colossal! This is the Skating Rink. This is the Opera House block.

CRU. The Opera House block! Is it for sale?

STRO. Yes. Cheap.

CRU. Then you can keep it.

STRO. (*folds paper, slightly offended*) You miss the chance of your life. It is colossal!

Enter LUCAS L.

LUCAS. (*announcing*) Miss Carola Chapin.

STRO. Miss Carola! Then excuse me. (*bows and exits abruptly at back*)

GEO. Me too. I can't stand Auntie when she is tearful. (*exit after STROBLE at back*)

Enter MISS CAROLA CHAPIN; *she is an over-dressed lady of 50; she carries satchel. CRUGER comes forward with newspaper.*

CAR. (L.C.) Bear with me. (*dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief*) The sight of this office—the re-action. (*weeps and sinks on sofa at L.*)

CRU. (*fanning her with newspaper*) Don't do that. Have a cigar—I mean a glass of water. (*gets it from small table at back of sofa*)

CAR. (*drinking*) Thank you. (*exhibits limp handkerchief*) The third this morning.

CRU. (*seizing it and throwing it away*) Take mine. (*gives it; she takes it and presses his hand; he sits on the chair beside sofa*)

CAR. I knew you wouldn't fail me; but (*putting glasses up*) you look tired.

CRU. This is my tired day.

CAR. You shouldn't have any. It is a mistake. If you want to keep young, never permit yourself to be made tired.

CRU. I can't always avoid it.

CAR. (*beginning to smile*) You must try. Look at me. An old woman—h'm—comparatively. How old do you think, now?

CRU. I don't know, but whatever it is you don't look it.

CAR. I presume our poor friend, Mr. Brown, has left our affairs in a somewhat confused state.

CRU. (*rising*) Yes, confused is the word.

CAR. In this satchel are the papers relating to our funds. They will explain everything. (*offers satchel; he takes it and dangles it helplessly*) You shall be the guardian of our

interests, until the estate is—(using a circular motion)—is wound up.

CRU. (*aside*) She evidently regards the estate as a sort of Waterbury watch.

CAR. Henceforth we regard you as our rock.

CRU. (C., *aside*) Rock is good. I feel rocky enough for a whole reef. (*she points to BROWN'S empty desk and breaks out again; he rushes up and closes the desk, then comes down and tries to pacify her*) And what was the substance of your last interview with our late partner?

CAR. Spare me. It was of a sentimental nature. Oh, you do not think him a coward?

CRU. No! I think he had lots of courage, (*she breaks down again*) Here, have some more water. Don't cry in the glass. Remember, we've all got to die. (*she drinks and rises*) I'm not keeping you?

CAR. No, but I must go. (*he seizes her hand gleefully and edges her towards the door; she turns*) Remember you are his successor, and our rock. (*exit*)

CRU. (*coming down and picking up handkerchiefs*) Well, she's laid the dust.

Enter BARBURY from R.

BAR. Well?

CRU. Well, I am Carola's rock. (*points to satchel*) These are the papers. I'm in for it, Peter. And see here, if things turn out to be crooked, we shall have to straighten them somehow. (*BARBURY looks dismayed*) It will keep us hustling, but for the credit of the firm, it's got to be done. (*looks at watch*) I'll be off to the Safe Deposit. If there is going to be a crash, the sooner we know it the better. (*he goes up*)

BAR. (*going to desk*) And what about Sir Humphrey Whats-his-name, your uncle's executor?

CRU. That's so. I forgot all about him. (*getting hat*) In case he can't wait till I get back, he may state his business to you.

BAR. Eh?

CRU. (*shouting in his ear*) State his business to you. (*goes up and shouts at door*) If it is anything about that will affair, you can remind him that I sent my ultimatum six months ago. (*exit L.C.*)

Enter LUCAS with card, L.

LUCAS. A gentleman, sir.

BAR. Show him in. (*LUCAS ushers in SIR HUMPHREY BUNN, a stately man of 50; BARBURY turns and bows*) Sir

Humphrey Runn ? (SIR H. bows) I am Mr. Barbury. (SIR H. bows again) Mr. Cruger has only this moment gone out. You will wait ?

SIR H. I fear that will be impossible. I find I have a host of small matters to attend to before sailing this afternoon.

BAR. If your business relates to family matters, Mr. Cruger has already made me his confidant. (*motions him to seat L. and takes seat himself*)

SIR H. (*sitting*) Indeed ! Then you are probably aware that Mr. Cruger has absolutely refused a bequest of sixty thousand pounds left him by his uncle nearly a year ago. Now it might be pertinent to inquire if Mr. Cruger is—er—quite sane ?

BAR. (R.C.) Of that you may rest assured.

SIR H. (*with surprise*) And he is an American ?

BAR. To the backbone.

SIR H. Which makes the case still more extraordinary.

BAR. (*resentfully*) There are Americans and Americans.

SIR H. Are there, indeed ? It is a subject upon which I am deplorably ignorant. I have a letter sent to me by Mr. Cruger some six months ago. On referring to it I find that he will be thirty years old on the 28th of this month. The day after to-morrow. Now the reversionary heirs cannot, before that date, take possession. Hence my reason for delaying this business. I wished to give Mr. Cruger till the last moment to reconsider his determination.

BAR. He will not reconsider it. He regards the conditions of the will as insulting to his American parentage.

SIR H. A one-sided view of the case. Sir John Carew was doubtless a man of prejudice. Many estimable people are. H'm—I myself am not devoid of prejudice. Sir John's only sister formed an alliance against his consent. The object of her choice was an American. What wonder that the words "America" and "American" were thenceforward obnoxious to Sir John ?

BAR. But he has disinherited his daughter.

SIR H. Yes, for following in her aunt's footsteps. Shortly before her father's death, Beatrice made the acquaintance of an American, whose attentions she persisted in receiving.

BAR. Then to whom does the money go ?

SIR H. To the Archæological Society—that is, in the event of Mr. Cruger refusing to comply with the terms of the will.

BAR. Is not this will regarded as eccentric ?

SIR H. Not when one bears in mind Sir John's obvious purpose, which was to transform his nephew—h'm—as far as

that were possible—into an Englishman. Here is a brief extract. (*produces paper and reads*) "To my nephew, Beresford Cruger, I bequeath sixty thousand pounds on the following terms: He shall marry an Englishwoman before completing his 30th year. He shall follow that ceremony by becoming a British subject, and shall legally adopt the name of Carew. Should he accept the legacy he is especially prohibited from sharing any portion of the money with his cousin, Beatrice Carew." (*aside to him*) To do so would be of course to invalidate his claim. (*resumes reading*) "Should he refuse, the bequest shall revert to the Archæological Society of Great Britain, for the founding of a Museum of Antiquities." (*folds paper and produces another*) By the way, do I understand that Mr. Cruger has no English bride in view? (*BARBURY shakes his head*) Then I may take it that his resolution is really final. I should like his signature to this paper. He may send it to me to the Waldorf—not later than two. (*rises*) You will kindly convey to Mr. Cruger, Lady Bunn's compliment's, also those of his cousin, Miss Beatrice. I omitted to mention that she was travelling with us. The shortness of our stay in this city deprives us of the pleasure of having him call.

BAR. (*following him to door*) I will explain.

SIR H. You are too kind. Good morning. (*exit L.*)

BAR. (*crossing and putting paper on desk R.*) Renounce his nationality—change his name—and marry a foreigner before he was thirty! The uncle wanted his money's worth. (*enter CRUGER L.C., in great excitement*) Ah, something is found.

CRU. Guess again.

BAR. What's the damage?

CRU. Brace yourself, Peter. At a rough estimate it is eighty thousand one hundred and twenty-three dollars and seventy-five cents.

BAR. (*in dismay*) What are we going to do?

CRU. I think we'd better go and get a drink, and make it even money. (*turns away*)

BAR. We are not legally responsible. Brown was trustee in his private capacity.

CRU. Well, we might as well close up the firm as plead that. How are you fixed, Peter?

BAR. I've been settling those old bills. (*goes up*)

CRU. Me, too. I hope it will be a lesson to us never again to fritter away money paying debts. (*crosses to R.*)

BAR. (*at his desk*) Oh, by the way, your uncle's executor's been here. He has left that paper. You are to sign it once and send it to the Waldorf. He sails this afternoon with his wife, and your cousin, Miss Carew.

CRU. (*reads paper then sits at desk*) Great Cæsar's Ghost! But it is a queer time to refuse three hundred thousand dollars, isn't it? (*puts paper down and turns*) You see, Peter, this thing means your disgrace and mine, for as soon as Brown's defalcation is known, we shall all be tarred with the same brush.

BAR. (*at desk c.*) Yes, I don't see which is the worst off, Barbury, Brown, or Cruger. We are all in the same boat.

CRU. Except Brown, and he jumped off. Oh, Brown has the best of it. He has probably got an inside berth in a nice comfortable shark by now. (*taking paper*) There seems nothing for it but old uncle's legacy. Beresford "Carew." The same initials. My pocket-handkerchiefs would be all right.

BAR. (*coming down c.*) You have only forty-eight hours in which to make up your mind.

CRU. Yes, my wooing must needs be brief. Peter, do you happen to know anything of an accommodating nature in the way of an English damsel desirous of matrimony at forty-eight hours' notice?

BAR. Nothing I could recommend. There is the lady who scrubs the office. She's English.

CRU. But she has an impediment in her eye, and a housemaid's knee. I could never bring myself to squander vast wealth upon a lady with a housemaid's knee. (*Enter LUCAS with a card; he gives it to CRUGER, who reads with surprise*) "Miss Beatrice Carew." Show the lady in. (*exit LUCAS*) What the deuce can she want here? (*Enter BEATRICE; she is dressed in light mourning, and has a bunch of snowdrops in her gown; CRUGER approaches confusedly*) How de do? I was just saying to—to—my partner, Mr. Barbury, (*BARBURY bows*) that I—I—hoped you'd call.

BEAT. (L.C.) So you are Beresford Cruger, my American cousin? I've always been curious to see you. A penchant for Americans runs in our family, you know. That is—in the female branch. I discovered your address through Sir Humphrey Bunn. I thought I should like to make your acquaintance before leaving the country. I have something to say to you. (*BARBURY makes a movement*)

CRU. Don't go, Peter. (*to her*) Mr. Barbury has been introduced to our family skeleton.

BEAT. It is degrading—humiliating. Had I known sooner that my father's money was destined to preserve a lot of mouldering antiquities, I should have been tempted to contest the will.

BAR. (L.) You would have had a good case. He was doubtless insane.

BEAT. You think so? Do you know that he positively loathed everything American?

CRU. (R.) A sure proof of insanity.

BEAT. (sits) Mr. Oruger, I understand that you mean to forfeit this legacy?

CRU. That has always been my intention, but to-day circumstances have risen which compel me to think it over.

BEAT. I am glad of that. Oh, don't misunderstand me. If, by any act short of robbery, I could secure this money, which is mine by right, I would do it. But I cannot. Why, I would rather it went to you, than to——

CRU. The other curiosities, eh? And your father left you absolutely nothing?

BEAT. Oh yes. I had fifty pounds for my mourning. (rises, spiritedly) Do you know what I did with the money? (he shakes his head) I bought the brightest red gown I could find, with a hat and chiffon sunshade to match.

CRU. (drawing nearer to her) Chiffon! Bully for you.

BEAT. (to BARBURY) You look shocked. But I am no hypocrite, and I vowed not to put on black clothes for a father whom I neither loved nor respected.

BAR. (looking at her gown) You have evidently changed your mind.

BEAT. Oh no. (sorrowfully) This is for someone else. My betrothed. He met with a fatal accident while in Switzerland ten months ago. It was on his account that I was disinherited, and news of his death reached me three days after the reading of my father's will. So you see, I—I—lost everything at once. He was an American, and I bought this mourning for him out of father's fifty pounds.

CRU. I trust your father has got a good heavy tombstone over him. (seriously) And what are you going to do when you return to England?

BEAT. Get a situation, I suppose. I can't live on my friends any longer.

BAR. But, my dear Miss Carew, what can you do?

BEAT. Nothing.

CRU. I'm afraid you'll find the market a bit overstocked.

BEAT. I can draw. Queer old gentlemen.

CRU. Oh, you mustn't do that. Ah, I see, on paper.

BEAT. (sadly) But they all look alike.

CRU. Yes, there's a strong family resemblance among queer old gentlemen.

BEAT. I can balance a walking-stick on my chin.

CRU. Not remunerative.

BEAT. And ride a horse bare backed.

CRU. Aren't you afraid of catching cold? I mean——

(general embarrassment; all turn; BARBURY steals round and up to his desk)

BEAT. And there's the list of my accomplishments, Mr. Cruger. (appealingly) Oh, isn't it wretched to be a girl?

CRU. (R.C.) I don't know. You see, it's a long time since I was a girl. (changing tone) Cousin Beatrice—you don't mind me calling you cousin Beatrice?—I am more sorry for you than I can tell you. And now that I have seen you it would be impossible. I could not accept this money—which was once yours.

BAR. (c. at desk) By refusing it, you don't benefit Miss Carew. You merely provide a Museum for Antiquities.

CRU. True. But neither could I benefit Miss Carew by accepting it.

BAR. That's where you are wrong. By accepting this legacy you might benefit Miss Carew and yourself equally.

CRU. You forget that the will specially prohibits me from sharing any portion of the inheritance with Beatrice Carew, my cousin.

BAR. That is so. But there is nothing said against your sharing it with—with—Beatrice Carew—your wife. (BEATRICE starts and CRUGER turns away embarrassed)

BEAT. (apologising for turning her back) I beg your pardon.

CRU. (with some embarrassment) I beg yours.

BOTH. Don't mention it.

BAR. Owing to one of the conditions, Miss Carew would merely become Mrs. Carew. She wouldn't even have to change her name.

CRU. (laughing uneasily) Ha, ha! I never thought of that. Her pocket-handkerchiefs would be all right. (BARBURY motions CRUGER and BEATRICE to be seated; they comply; he then takes his chair and places the back in front of him, and assumes a pose as if pleading at the Bar)

BAR. (to CRUGER, in legal tone) We find ourselves—I may say you find yourself—in grave difficulties, from which only a large sum of money can extricate you. That sum is yours provided you marry an English lady before your thirtieth birthday. In point of fact, before the day after to-morrow. Well, you don't happen to number an English lady among your acquaintances—and couldn't explain matters if you did. With Miss Carew no explanation would be necessary. She would place it in your power to right the wrong inflicted on her by an unnatural parent. In fact, you would both be provided for, in a manner that could not have been improved upon, had your uncle (turning) and your father done his simple duty. (mops his forehead and turns up stage)

CRU. (R.) Peter's a wonder. (an embarrassed pause)

BEAT. (*L. rising, to CRUGER*) Does your partner expect us to take him seriously?

CRU. (*rising*) Exactly. Peter, do you expect us to take you seriously?

BAB. (*going up*) Assuredly. And if you have not come to my way of thinking in five minutes, I shall have a very insignificant opinion of you both. (*exit abruptly B. into private office*)

CRU. (*going*) Here, Peter, hold on. (*collides with BEATRICE, who is also following BARBURY up*) I beg your pardon.

BEAT. I beg yours.

BOTH. Don't mention it. (*he comes down B. looking bewildered; she pauses, then turns and bursts out laughing*)

CRU. That's right, laugh. Keep it up. He's crazy, you know. Means well. You're sure you're not angry?

BEAT. I can't be angry. The situation is so absurd. Ha! ha! ha!

CRU. Isn't it? Ha! ha! ha!

BEAT. (*becoming serious*) I don't see what you have to laugh at.

CRU. No, no more do I. For I might do worse, you know. (*she glares at him*) I mean—you might do worse.

BEAT. But you don't mean to say that you would.

CRU. Of course not. I wouldn't so far forget myself. I mean—you wouldn't. (*seriously*) I don't know what to say. That is—I do know what to say, but I don't know how to say it. Cousin, I'd do anything to help you—make any sacrifice—there I go again. Don't let me talk—I'm better at thinking.

BEAT. You mean that you would be willing to marry me?

CRU. Yes, if you were to ask me to—I mean if I were to ask you to.

BEAT. (*quietly*) And you have no ties of any sort?

CRU. (*putting his hand to his cravat*) Ties? Oh! Excuse me. No, none.

BEAT. And you would do this for the sake of restoring to me part of that which my father has robbed me of?

CRU. No, no, don't give me that much credit. As Barbury says, the benefit would be mutual.

BEAT. Still it would be a sacrifice on your part, for of course the marriage could be nothing more than a mere form. (*sighs*) My heart lies buried among the Swiss glaciers.

CRU. (*aside*) Nice cool spot to keep it.

BEAT. Mr. Cruger, I have taken a sisterly liking to you. After me you are the next of kin, and justice demands that we should come at least before the Archæological Society. Your partner hints at some financial difficulty that suddenly

obliges you to consider my father's bequest. If I can help you—I—I—am willing.

CRU. (*tenderly*) That's mighty good of you.

BEAT. Not at all. You would confer more than you would gain. I should have an income and the protection of your name. In return you would get the money you require, and your freedom would not be interfered with; for we should stipulate to go our separate ways.

CRU. (*quietly*) Of course.

BEAT. There is only one thing more. You might—er—
(*looks closely at him*) No, you don't look like a man who is in danger of falling in love.

CRU. (*quietly looking at her*) And if I did?

BEAT. Then we should have to think of some plan by which you could be freed. (*pause*) You promise to let me have your entire confidence?

CRU. I promise. And you?

BEAT. There is no danger for me. I shall always have his memory. (*crosses to R.*)

CRU. (*crossing L. ; aside*) Where do I come in? I shall have to get a memory of my own.

Re-enter BARBURY.

BEAT. Mr. Barbury, we have decided to adopt your suggestion. I think that outside of ourselves, no one need be the wiser for this arrangement. Of course, Sir Humphrey and Lady Bunn will have to be told, but I undertake that they shall be quite amenable.

CRU. (*going to desk R.*) And what about this paper? My refusal?

BAR. (*coming down L.C.*) Write out another of acceptance. Miss Carew will take it to Sir Humphrey, together with the marriage certificate.

CRU. }
BEAT. } The marriage certificate!

BAR. Certainly. You are going to be married, aren't you? And remember this lady has to sail this afternoon. You mustn't detain her. She and I will go over to the Mayor's office and arrange things. You follow as soon as you've written that letter. Come, Miss Carew. (*goes towards door L.*)

BEAT. (*to CRUGER*) I am going to share my snowdrops with you. (*gives him half of flowers*)

CRU. (*aside*) Snowdrops. Nice, warm nuptial offering. (*aloud*) Won't you shake hands with me, and wish me joy?

BEAT. (*timidly giving hand*) I hope you will be very—very jolly. (*goes up to BARBURY, who is waiting at door*)

BAR. How I envy Cruger. (*sighs*) Do you know that yours is the only voice—

CRU. Peter! Peter! Come off! Enough of that.

BAR. Make haste, Cruger. (*exit with BEATRICE L.*)

CRU. (*looking after him, and calling*) Peter! Don't get too sympathetic with—with my wife. (*comes down slowly*) My wife. (*puts flower in button hole*) Snowdrops. Who'd have thought that I could have such a pretty cousin? (*changes tone*) Now to settle that Archæological Society in one round. (*sits at desk and writes*) "Dear Sir,—I have decided to accept my uncle's legacy, and in conformity with the requirements of the will, I am this morning to marry a lady of English birth; who will herself bring you proof of the ceremony. I shall leave this evening for Canada, there to relinquish my nationality, and—(*pauses and pushes paper away*) What has Uncle Sam ever done to me? No! (*rises*) I'll be darned if I—

Enter STROBLE, excitedly; he carries evening paper.

STRO. It's all out, Cruger.

CRU. What is all out?

STRO. The "Evening Telegram." Listen. (*reads*) "Light on the mysterious suicide. Brown betrayed his trust. The Ohapins ruined. Barbury and Cruger suspiciously silent."

CRU. It is a lie!

STRO. What?

CRU. That report has got to be contradicted. We have found the bonds. Send Lucas off to the Associated Press. (*STROBLE exits L., and CRUGER returns to his desk. He takes a long breath, then pulls the letter towards him*) "To relinquish my nationality." (*finishes letter silently; re-enter STROBLE; he takes map from his pocket and examines it; starts whistling "Yankee Doodle"; CRUGER looks up once or twice, then turns abruptly*) Can't you whistle some other tune? I'm abdicating. (*STROBLE looks astonished and stops; CRUGER puts letter in envelope; aside*) Three hundred thousand dollars! A hundred and fifteen of it for little Beresford. The question is, what is to be done with the surplus! (*looks at STROBLE*) Say, Otto. Is your Opera House block still for sale?

STRO. Yes, why?

CRU. Well, I guess I'll buy it. (*STROBLE starts*) I've come into some money, and I'm going to send it out West to—
to grow up with the country. (*going up to door L.*)

STRO. *Colossal!*

CRU. By-bye, Otto. I've got a pressing engagement with the Mayor, and then I'm off to Canada. (*stoops and turns up his trousers*) That reminds me. Otto, I'm about to become a blooming Britisher. By-bye, old chappie. (*exit L.C. as curtain falls*)

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END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

ONE YEAR LATER.

SCENE.—*Confetti day during the Flower Carnival at Nice; a corner in the Place Massena; hotel covered with vines, and half hidden by trees L.; small tables and seats outside; flower-stands at back; palms, orange trees, etc., in great profusion; confetti is strewn about; band playing off and merry shouts heard as curtain rises; seated at table among other visitors are CAROLA CHAPIN and GEORGIA CHAPIN; they rise as curtain goes up.*

CAR. See how the Grand Stand is filling up. If Mr. Barbury doesn't come soon, we shan't be able to get our places. *(shouts outside)* What is the excitement?

GEO. It is the arrival of that English girl who lives at the Grand Bretagne. Her appearance always creates a sensation. Look at her landau. Isn't it exquisite? You can scarcely see the wheels for violets. She is sure to get the prize.

CAR. Who are those people with her?

GEO. Lady Bunn and her stepson. They come to the hotel to visit her. *(they go up)*

CAR. *(looking off)* What a stylish-looking young man. We must get some one to introduce us. *(exit followed by GEORGIA; shouts and laughter heard)*

Enter CRUGER upper L.; he has his trousers turned up; he is followed by a shower of confetti.

CRU. *(putting his hand to his neck)* I've got a peek of that stuff down my back already.

Enter BARBURY.

BAR. So you've got here at last?

CRU. Hallo, Peter! *(band plays National Anthem)* They evidently know that I've arrived.

BAR. Oh, don't worry. That isn't for you, but for your sovereign, His Most Gracious Majesty.

CRU. I should think he's beginning to know that tune.

BAR. Some of the young Princesses are to witness the Carnival.

CRU. What? Are they here, too? They've been everywhere that I've been for the last six weeks. I think they ought to be told that I'm a married man. *(BARBURY laughs)* Married a whole year and never had a cross word with my wife. How's that for a record?

BAR. I wonder if we should know her again!

CRU. We? Since how long are we partners in my marriage?

BAR. Pshaw! A man who has neither seen nor heard from his wife since the day he married her cannot be said to have any proprietary rights.

CRU. But I have heard from her. She sent me a card at Christmas. One of those things with a frosted church steeple in the distance. She seems to have a natural inclination towards chilly subjects. I wonder if her heart still lies buried among the Swiss glaciers. (*he sighs, then changes tone*) Well, how did you leave things in New York?

BAR. All right. (*cheers heard off.*)

Enter VENDOR L. ; he cries his wares.

VENDOR. Les bouquets pour les batailles des fleurs. (*offering flags*) Les petits drapeaux des toutes les nations.

CRU. (*to BARBURY*) Have a flag with me. (*VENDOR gives American flag to BARBURY and English flag to CRUGER*) That's right. Rub it in. (*pins flag on and buys three large bouquets ; exit VENDOR R. ; shouts*) What is that? (*both go up and look off R.*) The Floral Procession! Peter, look at that girl in the landau. They are pelting her with roses and violets to match her decorations. I must have a shy. (*throws bouquet*) Good! Where is she? Ah, there, a beauty by Jove! (*throws second bouquet*) Ah! She's gone. What a crowd of swells. We are all here, that's a fact. (*comes down L. and puts third bouquet on bench*)

BAR. (*R.C.*) By the way, Berry, I saw a man at the tables last night whom I could have sworn was Egerton Brown.

CRU. You've got to change your drinks over here.

BAR. After the game I made a search, but he had disappeared in the crowd.

CRU. Ah, returned to his coral reef at the bottom of the Atlantic.

BAR. By the way, your enterprising friend Stroble crossed on the ship with me. He has another new scheme. (*looks off L.*) Good Lord! Talk of the——

Enter STROBLE from L. with telegram ; he comes down a.

STRO. Barbury, you want an investment? The chance of a lifetime. (*waves telegram, then turns*) Bless me, it is Cruger.

CRU. Not Cruger—Carew. Beresford Carew. How's my Opera House block getting on?

STRO. Colossal! We wait only for the boom. And I tell you something more. I've bought a stove polish. I come

to Europe to push it. I've advertised on the rocks all over Carbon Centre.

CRU. Not on my Opera House block?

STRO. Yes, but I take you into partnership, and we make a fortune. *Colossal!* (*looks off*) Miss Chapin—what is she looking for? Ah! Maybe she wants an investment. Excuse me, aufwiedersehn! See you later. (*hurries off R.*)

CRU. So the Chapins are here. How is Auntie?

BAR. Don't—don't mention her, Berry. Last night she—

CRU. Don't tell me that you have been growing sympathetic with Carola. Why didn't you turn your deaf ear? (*laughs*)

BAR. Don't laugh at me, Berry. I haven't slept a wink all night. Now if you wouldn't mind cutting me out—you were always her favourite—after Brown.

CRU. She seems determined to go through the firm.

BAR. Where are you staying?

CRU. (*pointing to hotel*) Here, for the present, but it is a little too *recherché* pour moi. Three francs for a toothpick. I'm going to move.

BAR. Come to the Grande Bretagne.

CRU. The Grande Bretagne—good! (*goes to hotel and calls*) Garçon! (*aside*) How's that? Peter, get on to the accent. (*calls*) Garçon, send my man out here. (*voice answers off; he comes C.*) You don't know Simms, do you? I acquired Simms in London. He's a wonder. Highest finish. Steel stampings, and detachable brake. I think of taking out a patent for him. (*Enter SIMMS noiselessly; he is a stately valet; CRUGER starts as he discovers SIMMS at his side, then glances at his shoes*) Why don't you take off those pneumatic tyres? (*aside*) This is Simms. (*aloud*) Simms, you will have my baggage taken to the Hotel Grande Bretagne.

SIM. Your luggage—yes, sir. (*exits to hotel*)

CRU. Luggage! What do you think of that? I get it all, including the pattern on his vest, for a hundred and fifty dollars a year.

Enter CAROLA R.

CAR. (*approaching BARBURY*) You naughty person. The procession is nearly ended. (*turning*) Why, it is Mr. Cruger!

CRU. (L.C.) Carew, if you please.

CAR. (C.) To be sure. So hard to accustom one's self to a new name.

CRU. Ladies generally manage to overcome the difficulty.

CAR. So I was assured last night. (*BARBURY looks uncon-*

fortable) Do you know that mine is the only voice he can hear with distinctness? (CRUGER looks at BARBURY) Yes, he told me so. And then he insisted that he was (*laughs*) an old fool.

CRU. Barbury is generally pretty accurate.

BAR. Excuse me. I'll be back presently. (*exit R.*)

CAR. Georgia will be charmed. We can never be grateful enough to you for straightening out those horrid business complications. And you have never learnt the details of Mr. Brown's death? Poor fellow! It was such a relief to find that he was really trustworthy after all.

CRU. Yes, it would have been hard to have to suspect Brown.

CAR. I used to admire him very much. I thought there wasn't his equal.

CRU. I'm pretty certain of it.

CAR. So glad you agree with me. A lack of faith in my own judgment has always been my weakness. (*sighs; enter SIMME from hotel with letters; he is about to approach CRUGER, but seeing him engaged, takes a good look at CAROLA; then exits L.*) It was the same twelve years ago when I was a mere girl. Now you are quite the reverse. Anyone can see that. Resolute—firm of purpose.

CRU. Yes. Always have been from the time I was a boy—eighteen months since.

CAR. Mr. Carew, I am wondering what has brought you to Nice?

CRU. You ask me that, and you—you—are here? (*offers his arm*)

CAR. We thought of leaving to-morrow.

CRU. So soon? (*aside*) Then I guess I can whoop it up a bit. (*he turns to her*) Have you seen all the sights?

CAR. Oh yes. The wicked gamblers. (*pauses at exit L.*)
PAR ici.

CRU. Comment? (*she repeats*) Allons donc! (*exsunt L.*)

Enter GEORGIA, BARBURY, and STROBLE R.

STRO. (*to BARBURY, excitedly*) I raise a mortgage on the Lunatic Asylum—I buy five hundred more acres for the boom—and now for the Stove polish. I let you in.

BAR. Thank you, I don't care to be let in.

STRO. But it is the chance of a lifetime. I make a syndicate with myself. You and Carew have one half. I have the other.

GEO. So Mr. Carew has arrived.

BAR. Yes. Here he comes.

Enter CRUGER L.

CRU. (to BARBURY) I've fixed it with Carola. Péter, your star is already on the wane. By to-morrow you won't exist. (sees GEORGIA) Why, Georgia, it is as good as a drive through Central Park to see you. (*comes down*)

GEO. (R.) Better, for it doesn't cost anything. (*looks at him*; BARBURY and STROBLE talk aside)

CRU. (L.) What's the matter, Georgia? (*jestingly*) I'm afraid you don't love me with that wonted fervour.

GEO. I'm afraid I don't. (*seriously*) You have disappointed me.

CRU. You are not serious? (*she nods*) But we have always been such friends. What is it? (*she looks at his flag*) Is it this? (*touches it*)

GEO. Of all renegades, the man who renounces his country is the worst.

CRU. (*thoughtfully*) Yet there have been extenuating circumstances. I have in mind a fellow—oh, you don't know him—who did it once to save two of his fellow-creatures from ruin.

GEO. But you did it for money. If you hadn't become a renegade, you wouldn't have been so well off.

CRU. If I hadn't become a renegade, as you call it, a good many of us might not have been so well off.

GEO. What do you mean?

CRU. (*smiling*) Nothing. I don't want you to think badly of me, and I am trying to make out a good case, that's all. Come, shake hands, and say I'm forgiven. (*she gives him her hand and looks at him wistfully*) There, now, we're friends again, aren't we? Just the same as ever. (*turns away laughing*)

GEO. (*sighing, aside*) Yes, just the same as ever. (*the band strikes up "See the Conquering Hero"*; GEORGIA looks off R.) They are awarding the prize for the best floral turn-out, and that pretty English girl has won it. (*exit R., followed by STROBLE*)

CRU. (*looking off R.*) Hooray! 'Tis my white and violet girl. Look, Peter, she's getting out of the carriage. (*snatches bouquet from the bench and throws it off*) Hang it, I've knocked her hat off. She is coming this way. (*comes down with BARBURY as BEATRICE CAREW enters R., carrying her hat in her hand, and a whip trimmed with flowers*; LADY BUNN follows; they are showered with confetti as they enter; CRUGER removes his hat and approaches deferentially) My friend (*points to BARBURY*) wishes me to apologise for his awkwardness. (*BEATRICE starts*; CRUGER looks up and falls back—aside) My—my—arctic wife!

BEAT. (*c. confusedly*) Lady Bunn, permit me to present my—my—

LADY B. (R.) You are Mr. Carew, I suppose?

CRU. (*he bows apologetically*) Excuse me, but I am. (LADY BUNN *crosses to C.*)

BEAT. (*to her*) This is Mr. Barbury, Mr. Carew's partner.

BAR. (*crossing to LADY BUNN*) I had the pleasure to meet Sir Humphrey about a year ago. He is here?

LADY B. No, he has been called to London on urgent business, but we expect him back to-night. May I ask how long you and Mr. Carew intend staying in Nice?

CRU. (L.) I thought about a week, (*looks at BEATRICE*) but now— (BARBURY *goes up C.*)

BEAT. (R. *trying to conceal her embarrassment*) Oh, you mustn't let me drive you away.

LADY B. Do not be indiscreet, Beatrice. Mr. Carew's stay cannot be too brief under the circumstances.

BEAT. Why? Nice is not a village.

LADY B. The Universe itself is a village when it comes to scandal.

CRU. There shall be no scandal, Lady Bunn.

LADY B. Then you must go away. For Mr. and Mrs. Carew to be in the same place at different establishments will create talk that is likely to prove—at least—embarrassing.

BEAT. Not necessarily, Emily. We are cousins. That is sufficient to account for the identity of our names. No one need know of any other relationship.

LADY B. (*turning*) As you please, dear. You must settle it between you. (*glaring at CRUGER*) In the event of your being determined to stay, Mr. Carew, I shall doubtless have the pleasure of seeing you again. (*exits with BARBURY R.; BEATRICE and CRUGER are embarrassed at being left alone; she crosses to L.*)

BEAT. (*after pause*) Lady Bunn is a little abrupt in her manner. You mustn't mind. She always disguises her real feelings.

CRU. (R.) I guess she's taken a great fancy to me. (*pause*)

BEAT. Nice is very full.

CRU. Yes. I came this morning, and, of course—it's fuller now.

BEAT. Is this your hotel?

CRU. Not yet, but I'm buying it. (*she looks up*) On the instalment plan. By dinner time I ought to have a receipt in full.

BEAT. What do you think of the dresses?

CRU. (*looking at her admiringly*) Yours is ripping.

BEAT. (*alarmed*) Indeed. Where?

CRU. I mean—it is great—elegant. Last time I saw you, you wore black.

BEAT. And do you really remember my gown?

CRU. Accurately. It had gores and plaits, and things down the side. It was very becoming.

BEAT. Still, one can't wear mourning all one's life, even for one whom one very much respected.

CRU. (*aside*) Respected. H'm—her heart is beginning to thaw itself out of those Swiss glaciers. (*aloud*) Do you know, I always associate you, in my mind, with snowdrops. I have some to show you. (*takes package from pocket-book and shows withered bunch of snowdrops*)

BEAT. (*starting*) Those I gave you on our wedding day—they are my favourite flowers.

CRU. (*replacing flowers*) Ah! You skate, of course. (*she nods*) I thought so. Is there anything above zero that interests you? By the way, I received your Christmas card.

BEAT. I thought you wouldn't mind. (*sitting L.*) There is no reason why we shouldn't be friends.

CRU. None. It is a duty that no husband and wife should ignore.

BEAT. Sir Humphrey was quite angry when I went back to him that day with the marriage certificate. But there was no sense in being angry then. It was done, and couldn't be helped. I have often thought since that I had the best of the bargain.

CRU. (*seriously*) I don't regret it.

BEAT. (*inquisitively*) It is true you have none of the ordinary restrictions of married life.

CRU. No.

BEAT. You can smoke—when you like—and where you like. And then you can go to your club—stay ever so late—all night if you like—playing whist—and enjoying yourself. Do you? I hope you do. I want you to feel perfectly free.

CRU. Oh, I manage to try and feel free. (*she looks up*) Not too free, you know, but just free enough.

BEAT. I suppose you—you—entertain ladies sometimes? (*he hesitates*) Oh, I know you can't very well get out of it.

CRU. That is just it. One can't get out of it. It's a sort of duty.

BEAT. Do you ever take them out to—to—supper, for instance?

CRU. Eh? Who?

BEAT. Ladies.

CRU. (*carelessly*) Oh, occasionally. A few—elderly ones.

BEAT. I have often thought what fun it would be when

we met, if we should tell each other how we had occupied every minute since we parted.

CRU. (*dubiously*) H'm—yes.

BEAT. In a friendly way, you know. Because we have nothing to hide—(*pause*) at least, I haven't.

CRU. Nor have I.

BEAT. (*poutingly*) I don't believe you.

CRU. You don't? Well then, how will this do? I have been the most abandoned reprobate that—

BEAT. (*angrily*) It isn't true. And if it were (*rising*) it would be no business of mine. We made a compact—

CRU. Which included a confidence. I was to tell you when I fell in love.

BEAT. (*catching his eye and turning up; embarrassed*) Oh, but you must be quite sure. (*looks off R.*) Look at those horses. Aren't they beauties?

CRU. (*looking off*) Do you like them?

BEAT. Yes. (*he moves*) Where are you going?

CRU. To see if I can buy them.

BEAT. (*detaining him*) Oh, you mustn't. I couldn't think of receiving a present from a gentleman on so short an acquaintance.

CRU. Then have a pony. (*points*) That little dinky one, with the Niagara Falls tail. (*she shakes her head*)

BEAT. (*crossing to R.*) Lady Bunn is beckoning to me. Good-bye. (*shakes hands*)

CRU. (*anxiously retaining her hand*) I shall see you again!

BEAT. Perhaps. (*hesitates*) I must go. Somebody might see us. Good-bye. (*she hurries off R.*)

CRU. (*coming down meditatively*) She is a dream. She needn't have snubbed me about the horses. I was getting too familiar, I suppose. Why didn't I ask her where she was staying? It is so unbusinesslike not to have the address of one's wife. (*enter SIMMS L.*) Simms, did you happen to see a lady talking to me here?

SIM. (*L.C. after pausing to think*) Yes, sir.

CRU. (*sitting R.C.*) Would you know her again?

SIM. Anywhere, sir.

CRU. Good, I want you to take her a note. You will find her somewhere along the Promenade. Bring me an envelope. (*exit SIMMS to hotel; CRUGER sits at small table, produces Fountain pen from pocket, and tears leaf from pocket-book*) How does a man write to his wife? "Dear Madam." (*he shakes his head*) "My own Birdie." No—that won't do. I guess I'll plunge in without any prefix. (*writes*) "Will you permit me to take you to view the illuminations to-night? It will give us an opportunity to discuss a few important

matters connected with our delicate secret. Eternally yours, Beresford Carew." (*enter SIMMS with envelope*) Shall I put Miss or Mrs. on the envelope? Wonder which she calls herself? (*to SIMMS*) You're sure you'll know the lady again? (*aside*) Then I need not direct it at all. (*puts letter in envelope and gives it to SIMMS*) Wait for an answer. (*exits to hotel L.*)

SIM. (*glancing contemptuously at letter*) Old enough to be his mother. A yellow parasol. Money, no doubt. (*sighs*) It is an avaricious age. (*exit L.*)

Enter EGERTON BROWN from lower L. ; he is followed by WILLIE BUNN.

BROWN. If you would like your revenge, Mr. Bunn, the tables are now at your service. By the way, is it possible that you are a relation of Sir Humphrey Bunn? (*sits L. of table L.*)

WIL. (*R. of table*) He is my father.

BROWN. (*in surprise*) Indeed! I had the pleasure to meet him and Lady Bunn in London some time ago.

WIL. We expect father to-night. I shall be awfully glad, because though I adore Ma, it is rather slow for a fellow to be on duty all the time. And there is no "go" about Beatrice Caréw.

BROWN. (*astonished*) Beatrice Carew!

WIL. Yes. She's Ma's friend, but she's got no sporting blood, you know. Not a bit like the orthodox widow.

BROWN. (*starting*) A widow!

WIL. Well, I presume so. She never speaks of her husband, but when I first came home from College she was in deep mourning, and Ma called her Mrs. Carew.

BROWN. But Carew was her name before.

WIL. Yes. She married a cousin, I believe, whose name was Carew also. There was some money business connected with it.

BROWN. (*carelessly*) Then I suppose Miss—or rather Mrs.—Carew is now quite well off again?

WIL. You bet.

Enter LADY BUNN upper R.

LADY B. Come, Willie. I'm literally starving. (*sees BROWN and staggers with surprise*)

BROWN. (*rising*) How do you do, Lady Bunn? I was just telling your stepson that I had the honour to—

LADY B. (*agitated*) I remember. (*looking off, then aside*) Willie, Beatrice is coming. Go quickly. Ask her to wait in the Arcade for two minutes. Don't let her come here. (*hurries him off R.*)

BROWN. Forgive me, Lady Bunn. Had I known that you were here, I should have prepared you.

LADY B. (*coldly*) And the report of your death?

BROWN. My name was used in mistake for another's. I was in that Alpine catastrophe, and lay in the Swiss Hospital for days.

LADY B. (*contemptuously*) This catastrophe happened the very week you learned that Beatrice's father had disinherited her.

BROWN. (*in injured tone*) Lady Bunn, is it possible you can do me so great a wrong?

LADY B. Wrong? Then why have you allowed the news of your death to go uncontradicted? Why have you hidden from Beatrice?

BROWN. (*simulating emotion*) It was months before I recovered, and then I had a still greater shock in store. The firm to which I belonged in America had in my absence been—we will be charitable and call it speculating. I was involved in their difficulties. Not only was my money gone, but my name was dishonoured. Do you still ask me why I kept away from Beatrice? I resolved to let her believe me dead, until I could clear myself—until I could get the money to protect her from care and trouble. Lady Bunn, I am come to renew our engagement.

LADY B. That is impossible. (*timidly*) Beatrice is—married.

BROWN. (*affecting surprise*) Beatrice married! And you accuse me of unfaithfulness.

LADY B. You do not know the circumstances. He was her father's heir. It was the only way that either could secure the money that rightly belonged to them. But true to your memory, she stipulated for absolute liberty. She and her husband do not even live on the same continent?

BROWN. (*impatiently*) There ought to be some way out of this loveless marriage. It is unnatural. You will at least let me see her?

LADY B. Yes, but I must prepare her. (*produces card and writes address*) Call on me this afternoon at five.

BROWN. (*taking card and going L.*) Lady Bunn, I depend on you to—to do your best for me. (*exit lower L.*)

LADY B. (*sinking on bench R.*) Poor Beatrice. She will never forgive herself. Never—never.

Enter CRUGER from hotel.

CRU. Simms is taking his time. Wonder if he found her?

LADY B. I didn't expect to see you again so soon, Mr. Carew.

CRU. No, but you see I'm living here just at present, and I kinder have to go in and out.

LADY B. (*rising*) I'm afraid I was rather rude to you when we met, but the fact is that Sir Humphrey and I have always regarded your marriage with Beatrice as a very foolish piece of business.

CRU. On reflection, I think you are right.

LADY B. Is there no way of setting her free? You are a man of the world, and ought to be able to——

CRU. Those whom the Mayor hath joined, et cetera, et cetera.

LADY B. I presume that is your jocular way of refusing.

CRU. (*with dignity*) Lady Bunn, when my——When Beatrice asks me, it will be time to——

LADY B. She will not ask you *now*. Mr. Carew, you know, of course, that Beatrice was betrothed at the time her father died.

CRU. Yes, but he's on ice—I mean he's buried in the Swiss glaciers.

LADY B. So we thought, but——he is alive.

CRU. (*after pause*) Does Beatrice know it?

LADY B. Not yet, I *have* to tell her. If you only knew how devoted she has been to his memory. Oh, it is a dreadful outlook, unless——unless——

CRU. (*thoughtfully*) I understand. I will think it over.

LADY B. You will not let Beatrice know that the suggestion came from me. She is so proud. I may trust you? (*he bows*) And depend upon you? Thank you. (*she shakes hands and goes off slowly, R. CRUGER comes down meditatively, produces packet of withered snowdrops, looks at them, then re-wraps, goes to lower R. and throws them away, then returns and sits gloomily on the chair at L.*)

Enter GEORGIA upper R.

CRU. Devoted to his memory. Alive! Alive!

GEO. I've lost Aunt Carola.

CRU. I congratulate you.

GEO. I thought I should find her with you. She is looking for you. (*he looks dismayed*) I am afraid there is no escape, Beresford. You see, she knows where you live. (*points to hotel*)

Enter SIMMS lower R.

CRU. (*aside to SIMMS*) Well, you found her? (*SIMMS bows*) By the way, Simms, if a lady—the other one—comes enquir-

ing for me here, say that I'm engaged—or married—or dead.

SIM. Yes, sir. (*exits to hotel*)

GEO. So that English girl turns out to be a relative of yours. What is she? Sister-in-law?

CRU. No. A sort of cousin.

GEO. By marriage. I suppose? (*he nods*) Do you know her husband?

CRU. Yes. He's a close connection of mine.

GEO. By the way, Berry, coming up that path I found this little package. It has a date on it in your writing. (*gives him package of withered snowdrops*)

CRU. The snowdrops come back! (*turns to upper L. with GEORGIA*)

Enter BEATRICE lower R.

BEAT. I wonder why Lady Bunn wanted me to wait in the Arcade? I like her idea of two minutes. (*she sees CRUGER and moves towards him; she halts as she sees he is talking and smiling with GEORGIA*)

GEO. (*to CRUGER*) Come and put me into a sacre, and don't look so woe-begone. Whatever it is, it will dry straight.

CRU. Do things always dry straight?

GEO. Always—if they dry at all. (*exceunt upper L.; SIMMS comes from hotel carrying valise*)

BEAT. (*to SIMMS, while looking after CRUGER*) You are Mr. Carew's servant? (*he nods*) And can probably tell me. Is that lady a very particular friend?

SIM. He's engaged.

BEAT. (*starting*) Engaged?

SIM. Or married. Or—dead.

BEAT. (*coming down*) How long have they been engaged?

SIM. For years. They are devoted to one another. (*exits lower R. carrying valise*)

BEAT. Devoted to one another. Engaged for years. What could I expect? It is my fault. (*sighs*) All my fault. (*exits upper R.*)

Enter BROWN lower L.

BROWN. Lady Bunn said I might call at five. What is the address? (*looks at card*) Rue de Batignolle. (*puts card away*) This is a great stroke of luck. Down to ninety francs. A magnificent stroke of luck. (*sits and smokes*)

Enter BARBURY upper R. BROWN starts.

BAR. Then I was right last night. Well, how are things at the bottom of the Atlantic?

BROWN. Well, I suppose you want me to render an account of myself.

BAR. (*down R.*) Render? Oh, don't render any more accounts.

BROWN. I was in a fix, and so I determined to put an end to it. I chose the Atlantic so there should be no coroner's inquest. You see I didn't want to disgrace our respectable firm. The sea breezes, however, brought me to a more healthful frame of mind. After a time I learned that my reputation had been saved, and I guessed that it was you, or Cruger, who had made good. Then I swore that I would never reveal myself till I could repay you.

BAR. How are you fixed now?

BROWN. My prospects are excellent. I have the good fortune to find favour in the sight of a certain young lady. We were formerly engaged, but there was a misunderstanding. She is now a widow, however, and this marriage will be my salvation. Of course, any discreditable revelation on your part would materially—

BAR. You need have no fear of us.

BROWN. Until my obligations are settled I shall not ask you to let me stand on my old footing. I can never shake hands with a man to whom I owe money. (*sits at table R.*)

BAR. (*aside*) I wonder his arm isn't paralysed for want of use. (*exit lower R.*)

Enter CRUGER from upper L. ; he comes down with cigar in his hand.

CRU. Simms has taken away all my things, and I can't find a match-box anywhere. (*sees BROWN*) Will you oblige me with a light, sir? (*BROWN rises, turns, then offers his cigar, and falls back with a start ; CRUGER quietly taking the light*) Why, hallo, Brown! How are you?

END OF SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

EVENING OF THE SAME DAY.

SCENE.—*Handsome drawing-room suite in the Hotel Grande Bretagne, Nice; door at back, and draped doorways R. and L.; a large screen almost conceals doorway L.; lady's writing desk near R.C.; small table holding lighted lamp L.C.; lamp is turned low; a large paper box lies on chair near sofa; BEATRICE is discovered at desk; she wears a tea-gown, and sits pondering, pen in hand; water-bottle and two glasses on table; bell on desk.*

BEAT. (*sadly*) Yes, it is the only thing to do. If I remain here we should be constantly meeting. (*thoughtfully*) "Devoted to one another. Engaged for years." (*sighs and begins to write*) "My dear Mr. Carew. You asked me this morning if we should see each other again. This is unlikely, as I leave Nice to-morrow. I take this opportunity of bidding you farewell.—Sincerely yours, BEATRICE CAREW." (*looking up*) I suppose I ought to have told him about the re-appearance of my—of Mr. Brown. But no—he would think that I—Oh, I cannot explain—not even to myself. (*rises*) Why is it? We long for something blindly—desperately. We must not have it, and after a while we bow to the inevitable, like good children. Then Fate comes along, like a vindictive mother, and gives us what she has withheld. We look at the prize in astonishment, and we say, is that all? And Fate laughs. (*sighs; enter ANNETTE L.*) Annette, I want you to take this letter to that hotel in the Place Massena. Mind you deliver it to the gentleman in person. (*gives the letter; knock at door*) Hush—I am not at home to any one. (*ANNETTE goes to door and opens it*)

AN. It is only Lady Bunn.

BEAT. (*quickly*) Annette, do I look as if I had been crying?

AN. No, madam. (*exit at back*)

Enter LADY BUNN.

LADY B. (*coming down*) How are you, dear? You look worn out. I don't wonder. To run across a husband and a sweetheart both in one day is enough to upset anybody's nerves. (*sits R. of table*) I've been thinking the whole thing over since you left my place this afternoon, and I've concluded that when Humphrey arrives he had better see Mr. Carew, and discuss the matter from a man to man point of

view. There is no doubt that poor Mr. Brown is broken-hearted. By the way, I have accepted an invitation from Mr. Brown to take us to the ball at the Prefecture. (BEATRICE *shakes her head*) I insist. One moment. You did not tell him that your husband was in Nice? (BEATRICE *shakes head*) Ah, that is quite as well. He thinks you are staying with me. Don't undeceive him. He would be haunting this hotel, and we must avoid scandal. He is to call for us at my place, so go and make yourself look pretty. (turns, sees paper box on chair) Ah, the new gown has arrived. (reads label) "Mrs. Beresford Carew." Good gracious, Beatrice! What possessed you to have your parcels directed to you in your husband's name?

BEAT. I thought he was at the other end of the world when I did so.

LADY B. Well, don't do it in future. Good-bye. I shall look for you in an hour. (*exit at back as ANNETTE enters*)

BEAT. You delivered the note?

AN. No, madam. The gentleman has gone to some other hotel, and has not left his address. (*gives letter*)

BEAT. (*pointing to box*) You may unpack that box. I am going out. (*puts letter on desk ; ANNETTE takes box and exits L. ; knock at door back*) Come in.

Enter WAITER.

WAITER. It may please Madam to know that Monsieur has arrived.

BEAT. (*puzzled*) Monsieur? Oh! Sir Humphrey Bunn, I suppose. Very well. (*exit WAITER*) Annette! (*enter ANNETTE*) Lady Bunn has just sent word that Sir Humphrey has arrived. Run down and say that I shall not expect her to keep our engagement under the circumstances.

AN. Sir Humphrey? Oh, but Madam, that is impossible. The train does not get in till nine o'clock.

BEAT. Are you sure? Run and fetch me a time-table, and when you return strengthen the bows on my white shoes. (ANNETTE *goes off at back ; BEATRICE turns the lamp down*) The waiter distinctly said that Monsieur had arrived. Whom could he have meant? (*drops her fan on chair and exits behind screen at L. ; door at back opens and WAITER enters, followed by CRUGER, who is in evening dress with overcoat*)

WAITER. These are Monsieur's apartments.

CRU. (*looking round*) Are they? Don't be too sure about it.

WAITER. (*enquiringly*) Monsieur's name is Carew?

CRU. Yes; Beresford Carew.

WAITER. Then there is no mistake. These are indeed Monsieur's rooms.

CRU. That is—supposing Monsieur likes them. (*comes down*)

WAITER. They have satisfied Madam for three weeks.

CRU. Madam? (*aside*) The former occupant, I suppose.

WAITER. Will Monsieur have a place reserved at table?

CRU. No, thanks. I have dined. (*WAITER takes coat; CRUGER sits*) A man who is led into imbibing American drinks on a foreign shore is an ass. Talking of asses, where is Simms? (*rises, takes violets from buttonhole and puts them in vase on desk; enter SIMMS carrying valise*) Ah, there you are. Well, what do you think of these? (*looks at rooms*)

SIM. They are all right, sir.

CRU. Think you'll like them?

SIM. I think I shall, sir. (*ties WAITER, who goes off c.*)

CRU. I guess I'll light up. (*turns up lamp*) I may feel better by lamplight. (*looks off R.*) This is the dressing-room I suppose. (*exit R.; SIMMS looks round room*)

SIM. I don't see that this is any improvement. Wonder why he wanted to change. Must be just his natural restlessness. Or—(*sees fan on chair, picks it up, shakes his head; BEATRICE now tosses a pair of shoes out from curtains L.; they fall just in front of screen; SIMMS picks up shoe and examines it; he then drops it and raises his hands in holy horror as CRUGER re-enters R.*)

CRU. (*looking at SIMMS*) What is he doing now? Saying his prayers? (*to him*) Simms, you think you are pretty smart, don't you?

SIM. (*looking towards L.*) I used to, sir.

CRU. What, have you taken a tumble to yourself? (*SIMMS nods*) Well, Simms, I want your advice. In order to give myself an appetite, I commenced dinner on five mysterious drinks, described by the Bar-tender as "Ze Cocktail à la American," and there is now an international conflict going on inside. What is to be done?

SIM. You might try another cocktail, sir.

CRU. Not on your life. I want an easy death.

SIM. Then perhaps a brandy and soda.

CRU. Go and get it quickly. Then I'll try a shampoo.

SIM. You're not forgetting your engagement, sir.

CRU. What engagement? Oh, yes. I promised to go to a poker party.

SIM. (*glancing L.*) I suppose you'd like to get out of it, sir.

CRU. (*holding his head*) How did you guess that?

SIM. And what about the other engagement, sir. The lady I took the note to?

CRU. Oh, yes! What did she say?

SIM. She said she'd be enchanted.

CRU. (*astonished*) No ! (*aside*) As an embellisher of sentences, I don't know Simms's equal. (*aloud*) That engagement is off. ((*aside, pensively*) She wouldn't go out with me now that he has come to life.

SIM. Ahem ! I thought it would be "off," sir.

CRU. Simms, you want to do a little less thinking. (*knock at door*) Come in.

Enter WAITER with parcel.

WAITER. (*laying parcel on sofa L.*) For Madam. (*exit*)

CRU. (*surprised*) What does he mean, Simms ?

SIM. Ahem ! I don't know, if you don't, sir.

CRU. Take it down and say they've made a mistake.

SIM. (*lowering his voice*) I wouldn't do that, sir.

CRU. You wouldn't ? See here, Simms. When I ask for advice I want it in small quantities and well diluted. Take away the parcel and be lively with that soda and brandy.

SIM. (*aside*) Who would have thought he could be so artful ? (*exit at back with parcel*)

CRU. (*sitting at desk*) Look not on the wine when it is red. It should be, look not on the whisky when you are blue. I think I'll try an outward application of cold water. My head is like a furnace. (*sees letter that BEATRICE wrote*) A letter for me ! sent by hand. (*opens, reads to himself and refolds letter*) She leaves Nice to-morrow. Then Lady Bunn has told her that her lover is alive ; and she is going away to—to—see him, and to spare her pride, I am to pretend that it is I who wish for freedom. Yes ; I have promised all this. (*despairingly*) What shall I do ? (*pauses*) Do ? Why, keep my promise. (*exit R.*)

Enter BEATRICE L. She has evening gown on. The bodice is unfastened down the back, with the exception of the top hook.

BEAT. Annette, Annette ! She must have come back, for the lamp is alight. She has evidently gone out again. (*picks up shoe*) She hasn't fixed my shoes. Well, I daresay they'll last for to-night (*throws them down and tries to reach back of gown*) How wretchedly dependent it makes one to have one's gown fasten down the back. (*makes another struggle to reach hook, as CRUGER re-enters R. He is rubbing his head with a towel. BEATRICE faceshim abruptly, and they stare at each other in amazement*) Mr.—Mr.—Carew, what on earth are you doing here ?

CRU. (*R.C., confused*) Bathing my head.

BEAT. (*L.C.*) Your behaviour is very extraordinary.

CRU. Not for me. I often do it. It's good for the hair. Of course, I should have postponed the operation had I known that you were going to honour me. *(he moves down and she changes her position so as to hide her back)*

BEAT. Is this a practical joke?

CRU. *(feeling his head)* A joke? Oh no, it is no joke. If I had had the least idea that you would call I——

BEAT. Call? Then you are not aware that you are in my apartments?

CRU. *(astonished)* Your apartments!

BEAT. How long have you been here?

CRU. About ten minutes. Peter told them that I was coming, and when I arrived they showed me straight up to these rooms. *(she starts)* Don't you be worried, I'll go down to the proprietor, and I'll raise——

BEAT. No, no. You mustn't do any such thing. You see I am known here as Mrs. Beresford Carew, and when they heard *your* name they must have thought—have guessed—that you were my——

CRU. *(angrily)* But that is no reason that they——*(pauses)* Yes, it is though. You don't blame me, do you? I'll move again as soon as—as my hair is dry. *(he moves up and she again changes her position so as to hide her back)*

BEAT. No, I have a better plan than that. One that will prevent gossip. We will let their mistakes go unnoticed. You keep the rooms. I'll leave Nice to-morrow, and to-night I will go and stay with Lady Bunn.

CRU. And in the meantime?

BEAT. I will finish dressing. *(turns to go L., but remembers her back, and suddenly faces him)*

CRU. Pray don't let me keep you. *(she confusedly motions him to turn away, but he fails to understand)*

BEAT. I am in a trifling dilemma. My maid is gone out, and my—my—gown fastens down the back.

CRU. *(advancing)* Certainly. With pleasure. *(she shrinks)* Oh, I am not so inexperienced—I mean so awkward as I look.

BEAT. It isn't that.

CRU. *(crossing to L.)* Then don't begrudge me the opportunity of being useful to you in—in—a humble capacity. Come, just fancy that I am your maid. *(she hesitates; he goes behind her)* Now shouldn't there be a long string with a tag to it? Hooks? Ah! *(begins to fasten; business)* Phew! There, I think that will do. Wait a minute, there's one more. *(Enter SIMMS at back with soda and brandy on tray; he starts, then turns his back; CRUGER quickly comes C.)* What do you want?

SIM. (*down R.*) The brandy and soda, sir.

CRU. (*crossing to C.*) What for? You know I never drink. (*winks at SIMMS*) I told you Anti-pyrine.

BEAT. (*L., calling CRUGER aside*) You had better tell your servant about our relationship. It is unwise to keep anything from servants. It only stimulates their curiosity. (*exit L.*)

CRU. Simms, bring me my brushes. (*SIMMS goes off R. and returns immediately with a pair of brushes and a hand glass. CRUGER sits and brushes his hair, SIMMS holding the glass*) Simms, that lady—who was here—before she went away—is—my wife.

SIM. (*R., wearily*) Of course, sir.

CRU. (*L.*) But you will keep the information to yourself.

SIM. I always do, Sir. (*CRUGER seizes the brandy and is about to open the soda, when BEATRICE re-enters carrying cloak*)

CRU. (*aside to SIMMS*) Take it outside and bring it back in the glass. (*exit SIMMS; CRUGER turns to BEATRICE*) Don't go yet.

BEAT. (*L.C.*) I must. People might talk.

CRU. But don't you think we ought to have a little serious talk ourselves. There is no use putting it off. Something has to be done. Why not face it?

BEAT. Do you mean—a—divorce?

CRU. That seems to be the only way to your happiness.

BEAT. (*significantly*) Are you quite sure that it is only on my account. Have you no desire for freedom for yourself?

CRU. (*sighing*) Well, perhaps I have. Anything is better than our going on like this. Yes, anything.

BEAT. Do you know—has Lady Bunn told you anything?

CRU. I know enough to make me want to help you. Beatrice, I am going to try and correct the blunder we both made a year ago.

BEAT. It will be very easy for you to desert me.

CRU. (*looking up*) Easy?

BEAT. Yes. You have merely to return to America. That is—unless your holiday—

CRU. Oh, don't mind my holiday. I'm tired of—of—pleasure.

Enter ANNETTE at back, with time-table.

BEAT. Annette, pack my valise. I am going to Lady Bunn's till to-morrow. (*exit ANNETTE L.*)

CRU. This will not inconvenience you. (*she shakes her head; he wraps cloak round her*)

Enter SIMMS with brandy and soda in a tall glass.

SIM. (*down R.*) The anti-pyrine, sir.

BEAT. Good gracious! You mustn't take a dose like that. I'll mix it for you. (*to SIMMS*) Take that away. (*he exits; she crosses to desk and mixes dose; CRUGER drinks it, with a side grimace*) There, I hope that will cure you. And now, good-night. (*extends her hand, and hesitates about going*)

CRU. (*L. C., taking her hand*) You have something to say. What is it?

BEAT. (*nervously*) I was thinking about a certain compact. You—you promised to let me know if ever you should fall in love.

CRU. (*impulsively seizing her hand*) Beatrice—I—(*turns away*)

BEAT. I don't think you have been quite honest with me.

CRU. You—you are right. I think I should have probably told you to-night, had circumstances not arisen to make it hopeless.

BEAT. You have a rival?

CRU. (*gently*) Yes, that's it.

BEAT. Who is he?

CRU. I don't know his name. By the way, I suppose I ought to congratulate you on having recovered your—your—friend. I hadn't heard about it when I wrote that invitation for to-night.

BEAT. I received no invitation from you. (*he starts*) I am afraid you must have sent it to some one else. (*sarcastically*) I regret that "circumstances" should have deprived me of your confidence. (*exit at back; ANNETTE comes from L. with valise and follows her off*)

CRU. (*sitting at desk*) Yes, I should have told you to-night. Told you all, and made a fool of myself. (*enter SIMMS at back*) Simms, to whom did you deliver that note this afternoon?

SIM. To the lady, sir.

CRU. To which lady?

SIM. The one I saw you with, sir. The lady with the yellow parasol.

CRU. (*springing up*) Jee—rusalem! Carola! (*aloud*) Do you know where she is to be found?

SIM. (*R. C.*) On the next floor.

CRU. What? In this hotel? Not a word that I am here.

SIM. She knows it, sir. Met her on the staircase just now, and she told me to say that she'd be ready in five minutes.

CRU. (*crossing to R. excitedly*) You go and tell her it's off

Here, stay! Tell her I've sprained my ankle, and shan't be able to go out for a year—I mean a week. (SIMMS *exits at back*) Now what did I say in that letter? Something about a delicate secret. That settles it. I've got to have a delicate secret with Carola. (*crosses to L. ; enter BARBURY at back*) A nice thing you've let me in for. I have hopelessly compromised my wife.

BAR. Simms has told me. But I don't see how you can blame me. I didn't know your wife was living here.

CRU. (L.C.) But that's not the worst. There's Carola.

BAR. (R.C.) What, Auntie? (*shakes hands*) Berry, she is cooling splendidly.

CRU. Towards you. Yes. But I have had to invent a sprained ankle, or take her out and discuss a delicate secret.

Re-enter SIMMS.

SIM. (C.) She's coming, sir. I gave her your message, and she followed me straight from her room.

CRU. (*snatching handkerchief from his pocket and handing it to BARBURY*) Here, tie that around my ankle. Quick! Quick! (*after business he runs to sofa, sits, and puts foot on the cushion ; knock at door*)

Enter CAROLA ; she comes down to CRUGER.

CAR. You careless creature, how did it happen?

CRU. (*angrily to BARBURY*) How did it happen, Peter?

BAR. Eh?

CRU. (*more sharply*) How did it happen? How did it happen?

BAR. He fell over the cat.

CAR. Cat! What cat?

CRU. Oh, just a plain common or garden cat.

CAR. (*sitting on sofa*) I was so upset when I heard about it. (*he presses her hand*) I have come to spend the evening with you. (BARBURY *begins to edge off*) How delighted you must be to see Mr. Brown again. He has been explaining about his disappearance. Dear fellow. (CRUGER *shakes his fist at BARBURY, who has sneaked off C.*) You are clenching your fist. You are in pain. Ah! My famous liniment! Why didn't I think of it before? (*rises*) I will return presently.

CRU. Don't! (*she turns*) I mean don't leave me.

CAR. Only for a few moments. (*exit back*)

Enter SIMMS R.

SIM. Your things are all unpacked, sir.

CRU. (*springing up*) Then pack them up again. I leave

to-morrow; and, Simma, if that lady comes back, tell her I've gone to the hospital to have my foot amputated. (*exit SIMMS*)

A knock at door; GEORGIA enters, hat in hand.

GEO. Oh, there you are, Berry. I just met Mr. Stroble in the passage. He was very excited and asked me to give you this. (*hands card*)

CRU. (*reads*) "The mortgage has fallen through. I have to go back at once to Carbon Centre. I leave my Stove Polish on your hands." (*looking at GEORGIA*) As if I hadn't got enough on my hands.

GEO. Talking of hands, how's your foot?

CRU. Foot? (*suddenly remembering, groans and limps to sofa*)

GEO. (*following*) Let me have a look at it. (*bends over, then laughs*) Oh, you villain! The next time you are going to sprain your ankle, tie the bandage lower down. You'll find it more effective.

CRU. Georgia, I don't mind telling you—

GEO. (*pushing him down*) That you're a fraud. I understand. I think you should have another pillow. It would look better. (*going L.*) And you may as well be comfortable. (*exit L.*)

Enter BEATRICE at back.

BRAT. I have just heard of your accident, and I have come to see if I can be of any assistance. (*he hides GEORGIA'S hat which is on the foot of sofa*)

CRU. You are an angel.

BEAT. (*coming nearer*) Is it much hurt?

CRU. (*groaning*) Yes. (*lies on the hat*)

BEAT. Let me remove that bundle from your head.

CRU. No, no. (*business, hat pin sticks in his head*)

BEAT. Won't you let me do something? (*GEORGIA enters with pillow*) I beg your pardon. I did not know that you were provided with a nurse.

CRU. (*introducing*) Miss Chapin, Mrs. Carew, my—my cousin.

BEAT. (*bowing distantly*) I think I had the pleasure this morning. (*to CRUGER*) I wish to get a warmer wrap. (*to GEORGIA*) Mr. Carew has taken these rooms off my hands, and my maid has not yet removed all my effects. (*bows and exits L. CRUGER sits up*)

GEO. I thought these apartments looked too attractive to belong to a man. (*looking L.*) She is very pretty, but you have doubtless made that discovery for yourself. (*smiles*) Take care, Beresford, don't skate too near thin ice.

CRU. Take care—that is what the man calls out when the little boy has already fallen in. (*she starts; he takes her hand*) You—you won't give me away? I couldn't bear to have her laugh at me. That's cowardly, isn't it? Women are braver than men. (*pauses*) What a capital chum you are! (*she laughs nervously and withdraws her hand; knock at door; he springs up*) Auntie with the liniment! I've gone to bed. (*he bolts off R.*; GEORGIA opens door and discovers the WAITER)

WAIT. A gentleman for Mr. Carew.

GEO. You are sure it is a gentleman? (WAITER bows) Then show him up. (*she closes door, then turns and calls off R.*) All right, Berry, a false alarm. Good-bye. If Auntie insists on the liniment, I'll bring it myself. (*exit C.*)

A slight pause, then the WAITER enters, ushering in BROWN.

BROWN. (*after glancing round room*) One moment. (WAITER *halts*) This Mr. Carew—is he a young, or an elderly man?

WAITER. A young man, sir.

BROWN. (*C.*) Thank you. That will do. (*exit WAITER; enter CRUGER from R.*; BROWN *turns in astonishment*) So these are your rooms. The waiter must have made a mistake.

CRU. You were looking for somebody else, eh?

BROWN. Yes, for a fellow named—well, never mind his name just now. Having tumbled across you, I'd like to ask your advice. (CRUGER *motions to chair*; BROWN *brings chair close*) I think of getting married.

CRU. Yes, so I have heard.

BROWN. I don't think I went into any details with Barbury, but I may as well mention that the lady is pretty solid financially. Now the sooner I can bring the affair off, the sooner I shall be able to square up our little score.

CRU. Oh, don't hurry the lady on my account.

BROWN. I can't hurry her, for the simple reason that she happens to have a husband already.

CRU. Indeed? Then how do you propose to marry her at all?

BROWN. Oh, there won't be much difficulty. I intend to watch this fellow.

CRU. I see. He is separated from his wife.

BROWN. Yes. She married him for his money. Now my scheme is to lie low, and—well, men are all mortal, you know, Cruger (*laughs*), and it will only be a question of time, when his wife may claim her freedom.

CRU. (*begins to watch BROWN intently*) Is the lady in Nice?

BROWN. She is.

CRU. And the husband?

BROWN. Is in Nice also. Though *she* doesn't know it. (*confidentially*) I'll tell you something more. He is staying in this very hotel, under shady circumstances too.

CRU. Ah!

BROWN. Now it has been suggested that this fellow be asked to set his wife free. That is Lady Bunn's idea.

CRU. Lady Bunn?

BROWN. A friend of my wife—that is to be.

CRU. I see. And you don't agree with this Lady what's-her-name? Why?

BROWN. Why? My dear Cruger, if the husband does this thing of his own accord, he'll naturally want to have the service considered in the bill. Whereas, if it is done my way, his wife will get something in the shape of alimony. That's clear, isn't it?

CRU. Clear? Why it is like a limpid stream.

BROWN. Ah, I thought you'd say so, Cruger. (*rises*)

CRU. By the way, I've changed my name while you've been dead. Allow me. (*hands him a card*)

BROWN. (*reading*) "Beresford—Carew." (*starts; pauses*) H'm—so you are my ex-fiancée's husband?

CRU. No. You are my wife's ex-fiancé. The gentleman who took that fatal trip across the Alps. Say, Brown, you're a corker at dying.

BROWN. You married my betrothed.

CRU. In order to pay up your defalcations. Isn't it a queer world?

BROWN. You are an impostor, travelling under a false name.

CRU. Don't get excited. Carew is my name, bestowed by Act of Legislature.

BROWN. So you are the gentleman I came here to shadow.

CRU. I guessed that.

BROWN. You—you are not travelling alone?

CRU. No, I've got Simms.

BROWN. There is a woman living here as your wife.

CRU. You are mistaken.

BROWN. Oh no. I have my facts from the proprietor of the hotel. (*the curtains at L. move*) She is in that room.

CRU. Don't you go near that room.

BROWN. Ah, run to earth, eh? (*laughs; enter BEATRICE L.; CRUGER looks at her and remembers his ankle; then sinks into chair R.; BROWN stares at her in amazement*) I must apologise. I have evidently been misinformed concerning the formality of your relationship.

BEAT. (*R.*) Not at all. Mr. Carew came to this hotel by

accident. To avoid gossip we have agreed to waive explanation. I am going to Lady Bunn. *(to CRUGER)* Pardon me. *(steps aside with BROWN)*

CRU. *(aside)* I suppose I ought to tell her that he is a blackguard. Then I win for him her everlasting love and affection. I'll see if I can't make him tell it himself.

BEAT. *(coming down R.)* Mr. Brown tells me that you have met before.

CRU. Oh yes, we are old acquaintances. That, I think ought to make it easy for us to discuss in a sensible manner the difficulties in which we are all equally involved. *(to BROWN)* Morally, I am an interloper, and to speak plainly, I am ready to assist at any undertaking that will result in the mitigation of my—of Mrs. Carew's painful position. *(BEATRICE sits R.O. and casts down her eyes)*

BROWN. *(L.)* Ah, this is business. *(sits)*

CRU. *(R.)* Precisely. And bearing that in mind, if I give my wife her freedom, I shall expect to have—well—*(looking at BROWN)* to have it considered in the bill.

BEAT. *(to CRUGER, contemptuously)* Had you not better name your exact price?

CRU. I should expect Mrs. Carew to relinquish the money she obtained by becoming my wife. I am sure Mr. Brown will agree to that.

BROWN. The delicacy of my position prevents me from expressing any opinion.

Enter WAITER with card. He gives it to CRUGER.

CRU. *(aside to WAITER)* Show Sir Humphrey up. *(exit WAITER)*

BROWN. *(rising)* I fear I am in the way *(to BEATRICE)* I do not forget our appointment. I will call for you at Lady Bunn's in half an hour. *(turns)* Unless Mr. Carew objects.

BEAT. *(spiritedly)* Mr. Carew has no authority over my actions. *(she goes up)*

CRU. *(aside)* That is true, or you and Brownie would be taking your last tender farewell. *(exit BROWN, leaving door open. BEATRICE goes to close it. CRUGER springs up and goes to door)* Allow me.

BEAT. *(L. looking scornfully at his ankle; he follows her glance with embarrassment)* So even that is a pretension. wonder is there anything real about you, except your love of money.

CRU. *(R. taking handkerchief from his foot)* Beatrice, I wanted to test him. I have my wife's interest at heart, and I cannot afford to take chances.

BEAT. To expect me to believe you is to insult my self-respect. Who first suggested a divorce—you or I?

CRU. (*humbly*) I.

BEAT. (*sarcastically*) But I forget. It was for my happiness. (*she laughs*) Mr. Carew, you have overacted your part. A year ago I helped you to obtain my father's legacy. We divided it. But you repented of your generosity, and you would now recover my portion of the money in order that you may share it with someone else. (*he looks astonished*) You see you have underrated my intelligence.

CRU. You wrong yourself and me.

Enter SIR HUMPHREY BUNN; CRUGER bows.

SIR H. (*putting down his hat*) I have this moment arrived. I trust Mr. Carew will receive my assurance that only the gravest reasons would have induced me to pay him so unceremonious a visit. (*BEATRICE goes up*) Remain, I beg of you. The ill tidings of which I am the unfortunate bearer concern you as well as Mr. Carew. (*turns*) Owing to our tardiness, Mr. Carew, in fulfilling the conditions of your uncle's will, the Archæological Society had begun to regard the legacy as their own. It was with the greatest reluctance that they finally relinquished their hopes. And even after the bequest was assigned to you, the Society made certain threats. A month or two ago they commenced a suit against me for the restitution of the legacy.

CRU. On what grounds?

SIR H. On the grounds that you had been guilty of fraud in making your cousin your wife, merely to evade the injunction, which forbade your sharing the money with her as your cousin. They claimed further that she was still your cousin, and nothing more, inasmuch as they had evidence to prove that you had never lived together as man and wife. I left the matter in my lawyer's hands, and I attached so little importance to it that it did not occur to me to mention the affair to Beatrice, nor to communicate with you. On Monday, however, I received a preremptory telegram from my solicitor. On my arrival in London I learned with dismay that the suit was going against us. (*pauses*) A decision in favor of the plaintiffs was rendered yesterday.

BEAT. (*rising*) It is too horrible! (*goes up*)

CRU. They will agree to wait, Sir Humphrey?

SIR H. Only for the money which has been spent. All that is in hand must be refunded immediately.

CRU. But Mrs. Carew will be permitted to retain her portion?

SIR H. Not unless you are prepared to supply the deficit.

CRU. Give me time, sir.

SIR H. That is out of my power. I am already seriously embarrassed. So much so, that beyond the share in our home, to which she will always be welcome, I shall be unable to assist Beatrice in any way.

CRU. Have no fear, sir. My wife's responsibility will henceforth rest with me.

SIR H. (*going up*) Lady Bunn is awaiting me. She bade me tell you that Mr. Brown is prostrated by the news.

BEAT. You will send my regrets to him, Sir Humphrey. I could not go to the ball now.

CRU. What? Does Brown know? (*to BEATRICE*) Then I think your message will not be necessary. He will have a suddenly remembered engagement.

BEAT. That suspicion is quite worthy of you. (*CRUGER shows SIR H. out, and remains up at door*)

Enter the WAITER; he comes down and hands letter to BEATRICE.

WAITER. For Madam. No reply. (*exit*)

CRU. (*up stage watching*) From Brown, for a dollar, (*BEATRICE reads letter, crushes it into a ball, drops it, hesitates a moment, then thinking herself alone, bursts into angry tears; CRUGER comes forward and stands at her elbow.*)

CRU. (*L.C. softly*) Beatrice. (*she starts, then walks up to door*)

BEAT. (*turning, half hysterically*) Excuse me, a letter. The contents were so very amusing—that— (*laughs*) Good-night. (*exit abruptly*)

CRU. (*watches her off, then looks at ball of paper, then reads*) And that's the man to save whose reputation I paid eighty thousand dollars. (*throws letter in waste basket; enter SIMMS, brushing a coat*) You need not pack up, Simms.

SIM. Aren't we going in the morning, sir?

CRU. No. (*SIMMS exits R.*) I can't desert her now. (*crosses to L.*)

Enter BARBURY, back.

BAR. (*sympathetically*) This is awful.

CRU. Then you've heard? Well, it means work now. Work, hot, strong, and plenty of it.

BAR. You mean to fight the case—to appeal?

CRU. No; I mean to pay the money back. Every farthing of it. I never wanted it. It has brought me only ill luck. I'm going to start afresh. Peter, what is your opinion of Steve Polish?

BAR. By the way, Stroble's gone.

CRU. Well, you see him as soon as you get back, and have him sell out that Western property of mine.

BAR. But you'll see him yourself.

CRU. No, Peter. I guess you have got to remain on this side for a while. You see I've taken a fancy to the climate, and then there's Brown. I can't tear myself away from Brown.

BAR. He's off to Paris at midnight.

CRU. Oh, he is, is he? (*mutters to himself, walking restlessly to and fro*) I suppose you know whom it was he intended to marry? My wife!

BAR. Yes. (L.) Why didn't you expose him?

CRU. Why? Peter, you don't know women. She wouldn't have believed a word of it. (*lighting a cigar*) And then, didn't you and I both pledge ourselves a year ago as to his honour? No, no. We've got to get even some other way.

BAR. (*approaching him kindly*) Why don't you go to bed, Berry?

CRU. Go to bed; what for? Any darned—sleepy-headed fool can go to bed. (*absently*) Don't let me keep you up, Peter.

BAR. (L.C.) Then come up to my room.

CRU. (R.O.) Not to-night, thanks. I'm restless. (*throws cigar away, then goes R. and calls*) SIMMS, bring me my light coat. (*SIMMS brings coat and then exits*)

BAR. Where are you going?

CRU. Going? I'm going to take eighty thousand dollars worth out of Brown.

BAR. You won't find him.

CRU. Oh, yes, I shall. He's gambling on my sprained ankle. (*goes up*) Good-night, Peter. Tell Simms not to sit up. If Brown goes to Paris to-night, it will be in an ambulance. (*exit*)

BAR. This is my fault. It was I who first suggested the marriage. It was to save the firm, but it was a mistake. (*calls*) Simms! Simms! (*exit R.*)

Enter BEATRICE cautiously from back. She assures herself that there is no one in the room, then she comes down quickly looking along the floor.

BEAT. I threw it away. He will find it—and read it—and read it to her, perhaps—and they will enjoy my humiliation. (*continues search*) Not here. His servant may have—(*she overhauls contents of basket and finds note. Knock at door back. She rises quickly and exits L. Knock repeated.*)

Enter SIMMS carrying a coat.

SIM. Come in.

Enter GEORGIA, carrying bottle wrapped in paper.

GEO. Oh, Simms. Will you see that Mr. Carew gets this? Tell him that it is the liniment, with Miss Carola's compliments. You'll not forget?

SIM. (*putting coat on chair*) No, miss. (*exit R.*; GEORGIA looks round, then looks at bunch of violets in vase, smells them; looks at the bunch in her gown, then unfastens them, and exchanges them for those in vase)

GEO. He'll never know. (*sighs, then goes off at back*)

Enter BEATRICE unperceived, and watches exchange of flowers; she comes forward after GEORGIA's exit, snatches the flowers from vase and throws them away, then she takes lounging coat, folds it gently, and lays it across chair; she draws chair to the table and then goes up; as she passes the bunch of violets she pauses and picks them up, hesitates a moment, then returns to the table and puts them in a glass of water, and goes slowly off. Enter SIMMS at back; he carries tray, with syphon, decanter, glass, cigars, and matches; he deposits tray on table, then takes the bottle, wrapped in paper, opens and reads label.

SIM. "Liniment. Outward application only." (*puts the bottle down, he helps himself to some of the contents of the decanter and pockets a cigar, hesitates, then takes another; he turns down the lamp slightly, and exits at back.*)

Enter CRUGER; he comes down a., calmly removes his overcoat, and displays his waistcoat unfastened, likewise his collar; he takes his necktie from overcoat pocket, and throws it away, he then removes his dress coat, and exhibits his shirt sleeves rolled up above his elbows; next he sits at table, turns up lamp, and gives vent to a long sigh of satisfaction; then he rises, puts on his lounging coat, and sits again; he now sees bottle and reads label, pauses, then rises, wraps bottle in paper, carefully seals ends with wax, then directs package and rings bell; sits, turns to decanter and syphon, helps himself to a long drink, pauses to smile at the recollection of his victory. SIMMS enters and CRUGER hands him package, saying quietly "Brown"; SIMMS takes it and exits; CRUGER finishes drink, lights cigar, rests his feet on chair, and, with another long sigh and smile of satisfaction, the curtain falls.

END OF THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

EIGHT MONTHS LATER.

SCENE.—CRUGER's London lodgings; Room connected with a shop office; door leading to office at lower R.; door, private entrance at upper R.; windows at back; fireplace lower L.; mantel with a framed picture of CRUGER on it; arm chair and small table near fire; a small neat bedstead near C., which when folded becomes a bookcase; round the walls pictures and placards "*Sun Stove Polish*;" a letter lies on table. At rise of curtain PETER BARBURY and GEORGIA CHAPIN enter through shop at lower R.; he brushes flakes of snow from his coat, and GEORGIA knocks her muff against the door to beat the snow off.

BAR. (looking round and calling) Hallo, here! (pauses)
Nobody at home.

GEO. (looking back into shop) Lucky the stock isn't portable. One cooking range, covered with different samples of stove polish. Ah! (points to handle of door) A boy's cap—but where's the boy? This business evidently takes care of itself. I suppose there is no doubt about our having come to the right place?

BAR. Oh no, this is right enough. Berry and I have been corresponding all the time. But you don't mean to say that you have come across all alone?

GEO. Yes. Aunt Carola has gone to spend the holidays with some friends in New Orleans.

BAR. Is it some business that has brought you to England?

GEO. (R.C.) Not exactly. I simply had to come and tell Beresford Carew that I had found him out.

BAR. (L.C.) Found him out?

GEO. Yes, about our stolen funds that he restored. (BARBURY looks confused) I see that you know all about it. Can you tell me if Mr. Carew and his wife are still separated?

BAR. Yes. She lives with Lady Bunn, but he provides for her.

GEO. (looks round) Poor fellow. It doesn't look as if he had enough for one, let alone for two.

BAR. I'm afraid he allows his wife to think him prosperous, so that she shall accept an income.

GEO. I don't know how I shall meet him. Are you going to remain here? (he nods) Because I want to go to the Exchange. There must be a letter from Aunt Carola. I shall come straight back.

BAR. Let me call a cab for you. (*he follows her off through shop*)

Enter CRUGER upper R.

CRU. (*shaking snow off*) Cæsar! I always understood it didn't snow in England. I wonder what they call this? (*removing coat*) Where is that boy? (*calls*) Here, Mercury! Mercury does not respond with that airy lightness that has been attributed to him. (*looks off lower R.*) There is something out in the street with a snowball in its hand that bears a strong resemblance to Mercury. (*darts off and returns immediately, leading a boy of 12 by the ear; the boy has smudges of black on his face and hands; he wears a long leather apron, has a husky voice, and is trying to conceal a snowball behind him*) So this is the way you go off and neglect the business. I shouldn't wonder if the Lord Mayor and all the Aldermen have been to make a contract for Stove Polish.

MER. No sir, they ain't. I should have seed 'em.

CRU. You're a disgrace to commerce. Here do I take a boy—just a plain wooden-headed boy. I initiate him into the mysteries of trade. I present him with attractive apparel. (*Boy turns away crying and discloses patched trousers*) I pay him the large sum of eighteenpence a week, and he has nothing to do but stand all day in front of a plate-glass window, polishing a stove, just like a prince of the realm, and this is his return. You are—you are—no gentleman. You have no sense of honour, or you wouldn't use the stock in trade—(*touching his face*) for your own personal adornment. (*takes snowball away*) There was a man hanged last week. When he was a boy it was his common practice to go snowballing during business hours.

MER. Please, sir, I won't do it no more. It only comes onst a year.

CRU. What only comes onst a year?

MER. (R.C.) Christmas Eve.

CRU. (L.C.) Christmas Eve. So it is. Well, go and shut up the office. (*Boy goes R.*) Say, Mercury, what is the proper thing to do on Christmas Eve?

MER. Eat things. Lots on 'em. Things with plums in 'em.

CRU. Can you get a thing with plums in it for sixpence? (*MERCURY nods; CRUGER gives money*) Mercury, what is that green prickly stuff with red berries on it?

MER. 'Ollly. And then there's mislingtoe.

CRU. (*gives money*) Ah! Well, I guess we've got to have some 'olly and mislingtoe. (*exit MERCURY lower R.; CRUGER goes to fireplace*) Christmas! The season when families reunite and friends come together in merry concourse. And

the lonely ones—what becomes of them? (*enter BARBURY lower R. ; CRUGER turns with surprise*) Peter! Well, of all the—why did you not send me word that you were coming?

BAR. (*shaking hands*) Didn't know it myself till I was fairly on the ship. I'm on business for a client. By the way, Georgia Chapin is in London. She was here just now, Berry. She knows all about your restoring the funds. (*CRUGER looks up*) No, it wasn't I who let it out. (*looks at him closely*) Say, old man, you are changed. I am afraid that you are overdoing things. Have you dined?

CRU. Years ago. I mean hours ago. But I can dine again. (*calls*) Mercury! (*Boy enters*) You go and fetch some dinner for two.

BAR. Nothing for me. I dined on the train.

CRU. Then—make it supper for one.

MER. The usual, sir?

CRU. (*winking*) Yes, the usual. A couple of birds on toast—a salad—and a bottle of—(*MERCURY starts to go*) Stay. On second thoughts I'll have a sandwich and a glass of milk.

MER. A penny glass—same as yesterday? (*CRUGER drives him off*)

CRU. (*turning*) I find I can work best on a simple diet.

BAR. And how is the Stove Polish turning out?

CRU. (*at table R.*) Great! I added another ingredient. (*produces sample from pocket*) Look at that.

BAR. You've got plenty of grit.

CRU. Not in the polish. It's as smooth as satin. Oh, I'm pushing it along. You see it is all I am ever likely to get in exchange for my fifty thousand dollars which Stroble put into Wyoming.

BAR. By the way, as soon as I knew that I was coming over I sent Stroble an urgent telegram. Here is the reply, evidently from his clerk.

CRU. (*reading*) "Stroble gone east en route for Europe." (*puts the telegram on table*) I wish I could run across him, confound him! That fifty thousand dollars would have gone a long way towards setting me free. I was reckoning up last night, Peter. By preserving a rigid economy till I am ninety-two, I shall be able to clear off this debt. Yes, I think I can promise myself that on my ninety-third birthday I shall be able to start the world afresh. Hallo! What's this? (*finds letter on the table, opens and reads*)

BAR. What is the matter?

CRU. (*looking at letter*) Lady Bunn expresses her intention of calling to learn my views with regard to a dissolution of my marriage.

BAR. Why don't you have it dissolved?

CRU. Because I am unable to make a settled provision for my wife. A girl brought up as she has been can't rough it without coming to grief.

BAR. A man can make too big a sacrifice for a woman, Berry.

CRU. Not if she is *the* woman. You see, Peter, you are not the only fool in the world. I sometimes fancy that if Brown hadn't turned up that time, this marriage business might have ended differently.

BAR. Talking of Brown, have you heard the latest?

CRU. What! Is he dead again?

Enter MERCURY with sandwiches, etc.

BAR. No. Opened a lottery down in New Orleans.

CRU. (*taking sandwich*) What is it?

MER. Polony, sir.

CRU. What's that in your other hand?

MER. A telegram—what come for you this afternoon.

CRU. (*taking it*) What come this afternoon. (*turns to BARBURY*) What do you think of that? A nice kind of secretary. (*threateningly to Boy*) You get out. (*exit Boy; reads telegram*) Great Scott! Strobble's in London. Listen. "Boom has arrived. Colossal! Have placed fifty thousand to your credit at Coutts's bank. Come and dine with me at the Café Royal." (*puts sandwich down*) Not to-day, birdie. (*turns to BARBURY gleefully*) Hear that, Peter? Café Royal? Where is the Café Royal? (*enter GEORGIA from shop*) Why, Georgia!

GEO. (*holding out open letter, half crying*) Don't—don't speak to me.

BAR. What's the matter?

GEO. Aunt Carola is—is—married!

CRU. (c.) Who is the victim?

GEO. (*excitedly*) Look!

CRU. (*looking*) Egerton Brown! Well, our wrongs are avenged.

GEO. But he is now my uncle, and one can't prosecute one's uncle. How am I going to repay *his* debt to *you*?

CRU. There isn't any debt. He owes me nothing. (*she looks up*) I gave him a receipt in full the night we parted in Nice.

GEO. Then why have you been living in this awful place?

CRU. Well, you see, I've joined the slumming brotherhood. We lecture to the poor on the facility of becoming millionaires on twopence a day. To be consistent we have to pledge ourselves to frugality.

MER. (*appearing at door*) Please, sir, the coals is all out.

CRU. (*pointing*) Our Vice-President.

MER. And there's a customer waiting. (*exit*)

CRU. A customer? (*to GEORGIA*) Excuse me while I go and attend on the Archbishop. (*exit to shop*)

GEO. (*looking after CRUGER*) The same old Beresford. Not a bit changed. (*knock at door upper R., followed by entrance of LADY BUNN*)

LADY B. May I come in? (*coming down with surprise*)

Mr. Barbury! Delighted. (*turns*) And Miss Chapin (*shakes hands*) I had the pleasure in Nice, I fancy. Is—is—Mr. Carew at home?

BAR. (*crossing and going towards shop*) I will fetch him.

GEO. (*aside to BARBURY*) Don't let him come for a moment. I should like to speak to Lady Bunn alone.

BAR. (*tenderly*) A commission from you is a privilege. Do you know that yours is the—(*LADY B. approaches*) that yours and Lady Bunn's are the only voices that I can hear with distinctness. (*exit to shop*)

GEO. Lady Bunn, I am almost a stranger to you. I hope you will forgive the liberty, but I am an old friend of Mr. Carew, and I wish to speak to you on his behalf. Has he not led you to believe that he is—er—fairly well off?

LADY B. Undoubtedly. He has never missed either his monthly payment to Sir Humphrey or his allowance to his wife. This, however, she has declined to accept in the future. I have no patience with her.

GEO. You think that she ought to—

LADY B. My dear, my advice is, a nice respectable divorce. Then you and Mr. Carew could get married, and everybody could live happy ever after.

GEO. (*starting*) I—marry Mr. Carew! Indeed you are quite mistaken. I do not—he does not care for me in that way.

LADY B. (L.) But he confessed to Beatrice when they met at Nice that there was *some one*.

GEO. (*shaking her head*) I think she must have misunderstood him. As for me—well, he is my good, true friend. Nothing more. My father left our money in charge of one of the partners of Mr. Carew's firm. Eighteen months ago this person disappeared, having misappropriated our funds. Mr. Carew pretended to find the missing bonds, and it was only two weeks ago I discovered that he had paid—out of his own pocket—the money that Egerton Brown had stolen.

LADY B. (*starting*) Egerton Brown—did you say?

GEO. (R.) Yes. You know the firm used to be Barbury, Brown, and Cruger.

LADY B. I remember. But the name Brown is so common that I never connected it with— (pause) My dear, I've made a most humiliating discovery. I'm a fool. (turns up) And I'm going home before I do any more mischief. (fire begins to die out and room grows slightly dark)

GEO. Lady Bunn, you are an old friend of Mr. Carew's wife. I don't know the secret of their peculiar marriage, but don't—don't—prejudice her against him. Don't keep them apart.

LADY B. (impulsively) I won't. (shakes hands silently, then exits upper R.)

GEO. (crosses to mantel and takes up CRUGER's picture) His picture. It isn't much of a return, perhaps, but I've done my best for you, old boy. (glances round, then presses picture to her lips and exits upper R.)

Enter CRUGER from shop.

CRU. Georgia, Peter's gone. Said he had an appointment. You'll stay awhile, won't you? (looks round) Why she's gone too. (sighs and crosses to fireplace; fire is now nearly faded out) Even the fire's gone. (shivers, glances at the lonely room, then takes up his own picture) You're a lively looking cuss to spend Christmas with, but you're the only one around, (goes up to window, flings open the curtains and reveals snow scene; church choir heard singing)

Enter MERCURY from shop, carrying some logs of wood in his apron, and bunch of holly under his arm; he puts holly in the corner near shop door, then crosses to fireplace and drops the logs inside the fender; CRUGER turns; music dies away.

CRU. (at window) Haven't you gone home yet?

MER. (at fireplace) I'm just a-goin', sir.

CRU. Then hurry up. It's getting dark outside, and it's snowing like blazes, and your mother will be frightened.

MER. No, she won't, sir.

CRU. How do you know she won't?

MER. 'Cause I ain't got no mother.

CRU. Then your father.

MER. I ain't got no father. He's a goner, too. (crosses to door) They're all goners. (turns at the shop door) Merry Christmas, sir.

CRU. (after a pause) Say, Mercury, suppose you and I spend Christmas together, right here? (comes down to table)

MER. (running down to table) I'm game.

CRU. By the way, where's the 'olly and mislingtoe?

MER. (*getting it from corner*) Here it is, sir.

CRU. (*sitting at table*) You don't suppose I'd stick up a measly bit like that? I'm wealthy, Mercury. Here's half a sovereign. See what you can do with that. And say, Mercury, order a lot of those things with plums in 'em.

MER. Hooray! (*exit laughing and cheering*)

CRU. (*taking up STROBLE's telegram from table; then rising and crossing to fireplace*) Solid once more. I can now get rid of this monetary incubus. More than all, I can set her free. I must write and tell her the good news. (*takes card from pocket-book*) Her Christmas card, with the frosty church. (*reads*) "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." (*the stage is now somewhat dark, and he reads card with difficulty; he crosses towards shop, repeating slowly*) "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." (*puts card on the table as he passes*) H'm—it is an old year now, but it has been a beauty while it lasted. (*music of choir is heard singing softly; knock at door upper R. repeated; then enter BEATRICE timidly; she looks round, displays some slight emotion at the bareness and discomfort of the room, takes her hat off to shake the snow off, then comes softly down; CRUGER takes package from pocket-book*) The Snowdrops. I'll pack you away together. (*he encloses package and Christmas card in the same envelope, then tries to close it, and hears footsteps behind him*) What, haven't you gone to market yet? Here, Mercury, you'll find some wax in the office. Seal this envelope. (*hands it over his shoulder; BEATRICE takes it; at the touch of her hand he rises and sees her*) Beatrice!

BEAT. (*nervously*) I did not intend to come, but I couldn't help it. I have heard something that—Why didn't you tell me who your defaulting partner was?

CRU. (*crossing to L.C.*) I had pledged my word. You were already prejudiced in his favour.

BEAT. (*laying her hat on table*) In screening him you were unfair to yourself. I've only just learnt the truth. That is why I am here.

CRU. If you had not come to me, I should have come to you.

BEAT. (*hopefully*) You would?

CRU. With good news. Beatrice, my financial affairs have taken a turn. I shall now be able to settle my obligations, and then have enough left to set you free.

BEAT. (*timidly*) You mean an income? And if I refuse to accept it?

CRU. It is the condition of your freedom.

BEAT. But your wife—that is to be?

CRU. Is to be!

BEAT. You once confessed to me that there was some one who—who—

CRU. I also explained to you that it was hopeless.

BEAT. You have never told her?

CRU. Never. She would be indifferent. You see she had an unfortunate experience. She made a hero of one who was unworthy. Since then she has judged all men by his standard—even her husband.

BEAT. Husband! You don't mean that she is married?

CRU. Oh yes. She's married—in a way.

BEAT. And you have allowed yourself to fall in love with a married woman?

CRU. Yes.

BEAT. And the husband?

CRU. (*half smiling*) The husband—oh, he doesn't mind. (*she looks up*) He's a friend of mine.

BEAT. (*sitting at table*) I don't understand.

CRU. (*smiling cynically*) How cruel you women are. You never spare us. You impale us. You drive the stake well home, and not content with our writhings, you exact from us a detailed account of our sufferings. The little boy is more merciful to the beetle. (*she is about to protest*) No, don't speak. When you first entered my office that day in New York, I looked and saw only a lovely girl, whose misfortunes entitled her to sympathy. When, after our unceremonious wedding, you bade me good-bye, you had suddenly become something more, and as I watched the train bear you away I already regretted the marriage which had raised a bar to our future acquaintance. When we met again, I thought I noticed a change in you, and I began to hope that the stringency of our compact might be relaxed. Then came the news that killed all such expectation. Your hero lived. I must set you free, for *your* happiness was now paramount. Then I discovered the man—his unworthiness—and I should have told you, but I was jealous of the additional regard that I should win for him by seeking to injure him in your sight. You see, I am only human, and I was in love, desperately—hopelessly in love.

BEAT. I never knew—I never guessed. Believe me.

CRU. Then I was wrong. (*changing tone*) But come, don't let us talk about it any more. We have other things to discuss. The question of settlements, for instance. Where, and how, would you like to live?

BEAT. (*dreamily*) In a great big country house, all my own.

CRU. I am afraid you would find that a bit expensive.

BEAT. (*timidly*) It wouldn't be so expensive for *two*, would it?

CRU. (*starts, pauses, then approaches her*) Do you mean it? (*she casts down her eyes, he draws her towards him; long pause*) I can't believe that you mean it, even now.

BEAT. How shall I convince you?

CRU. You know. You know. (*she kisses him timidly*) Again. I need a lot of convincing. (*she kisses him*) By the way, you are not doing this from motives of economy? (*she shakes her head*) Then tell me just once that you love me a little. (*she buries her head in his shoulder*) Eh? I didn't hear. Oh, that was only a whisper.

Enter MERCURY; he is staggering under a huge bundle of holly.

BEAT. What is that? (*MERCURY slowly crosses to L.*)

CRU. That is Mercury. My confidential clerk and private secretary. Mercury, my wife. (*MERCURY bows, drops the holly, then approaches BEATRICE*)

MER. Is Santa Claus coming to you to-night?

BEAT. (*taking CRUGER's hand*) No, dearie. He has come to me already.

CRU. Now you run home and hang up your stocking, Mercury. The biggest stocking you can find. Here, you hang up your trousers.

MER. Hooray! Hooray! (*runs off R.; BEATRICE rises and takes up her hat, which she puts on*)

BEAT. Oh, dear, see how it is snowing again, and I promised Lady Bunn I would be home in half an hour.

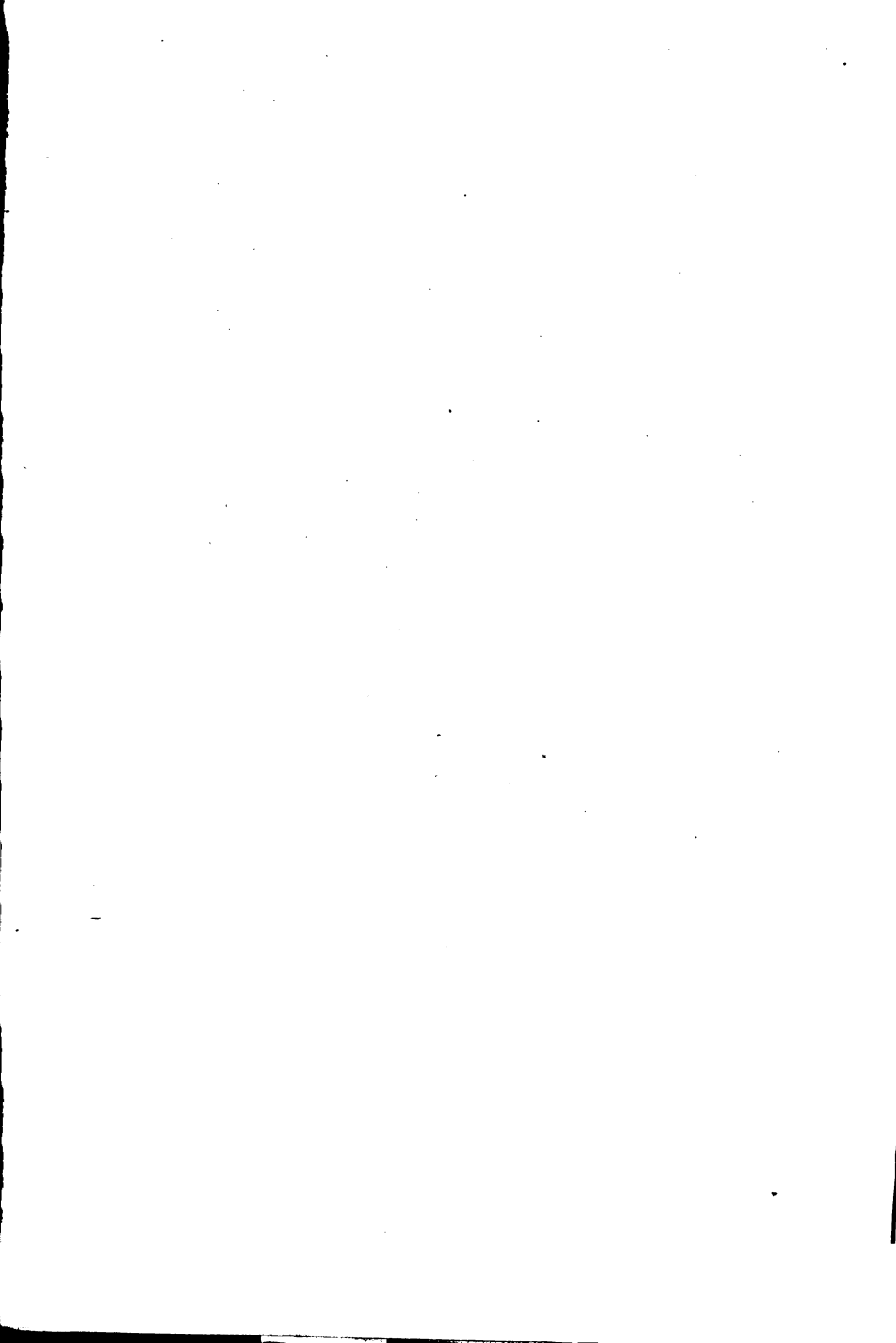
CRU. (*reproachfully*) Home?

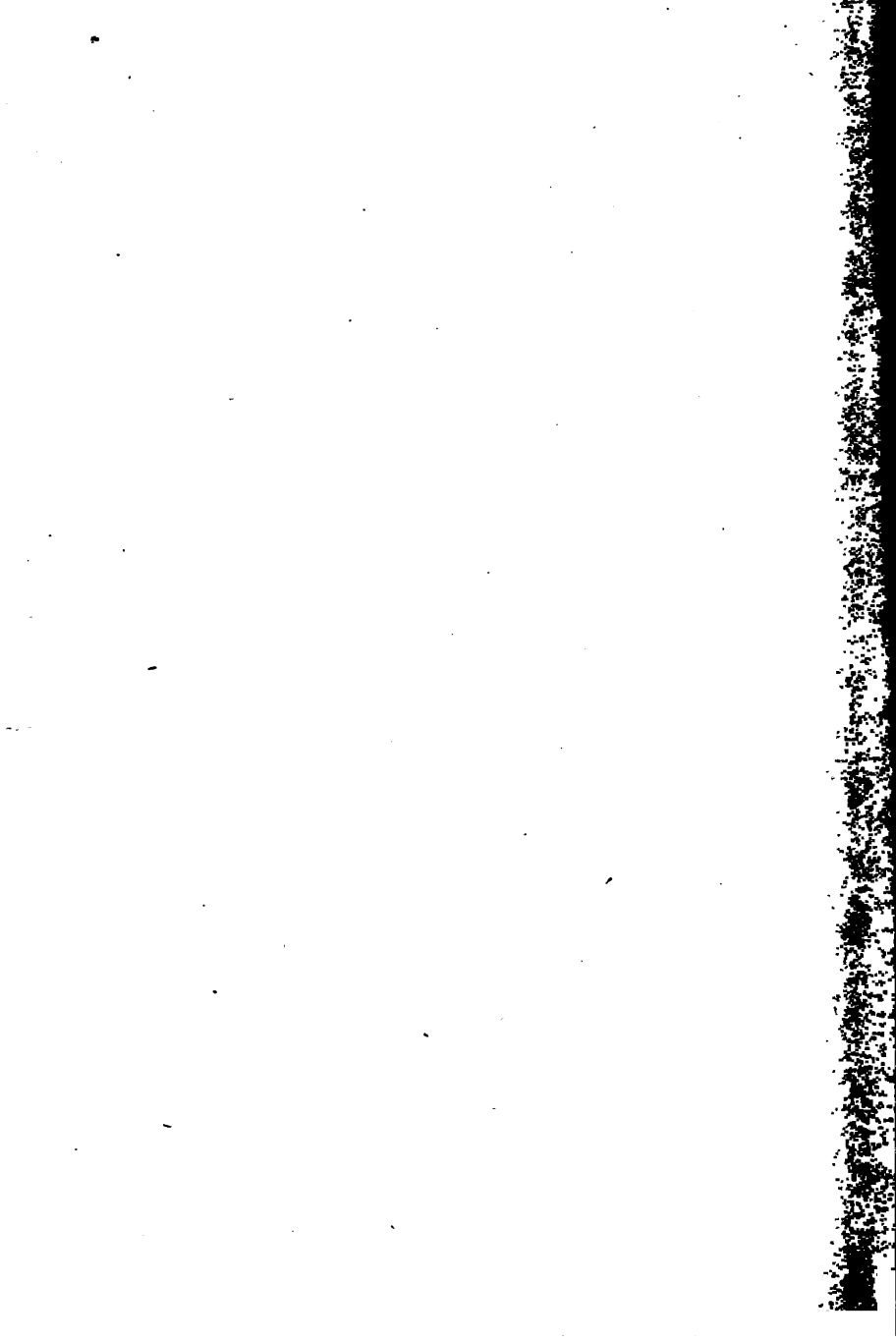
BEAT. (*smiling*) Forgive me. (*he leads her down to arm-chair, takes off her hat and removes the boa from her neck; the fire begins to blaze up; he places hat on mantelpiece; she sits in arm-chair, and he seats himself on the arm, he is facing her. and he extends his arms*)

CRU. Home!

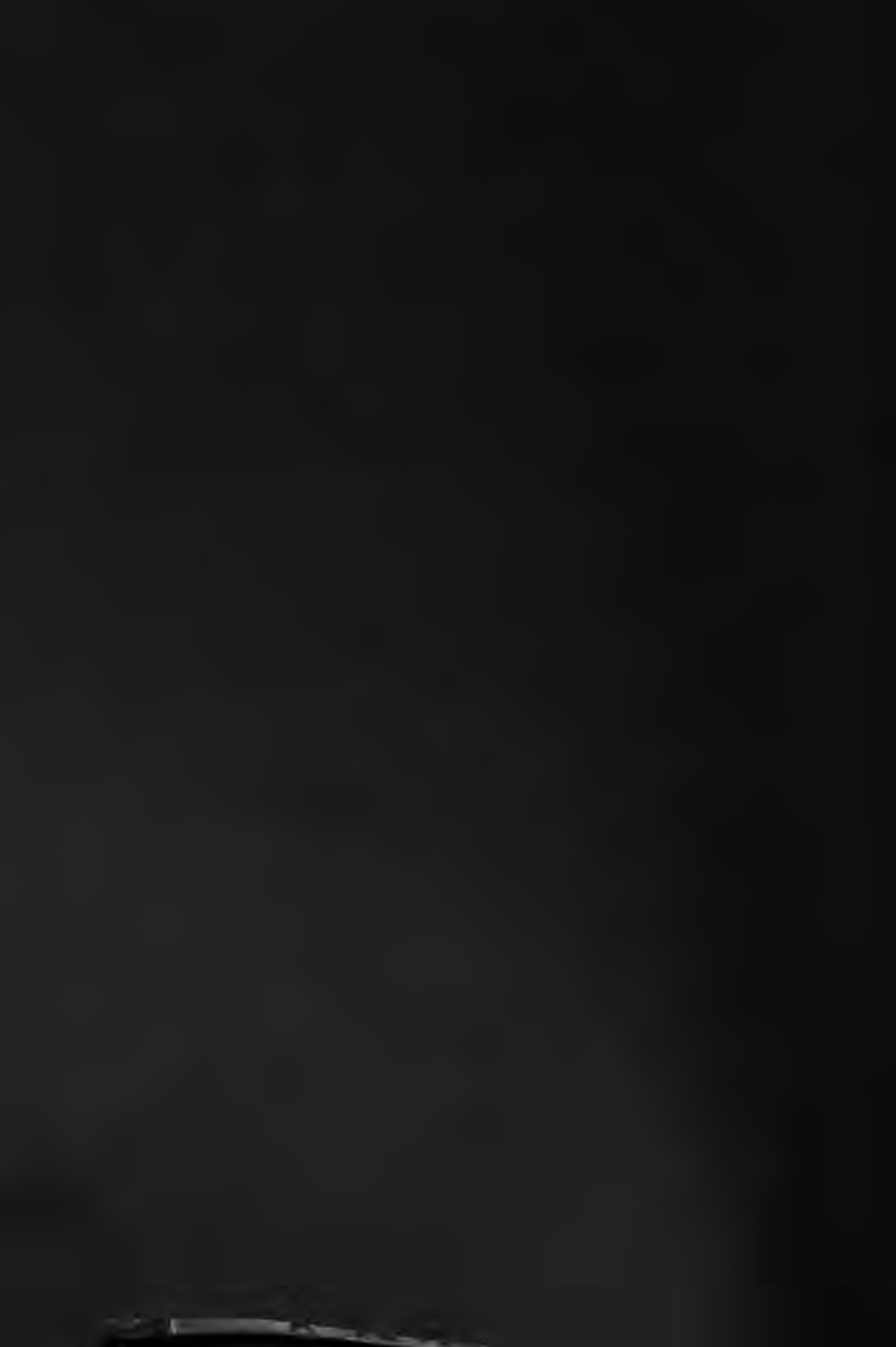
CURTAIN.

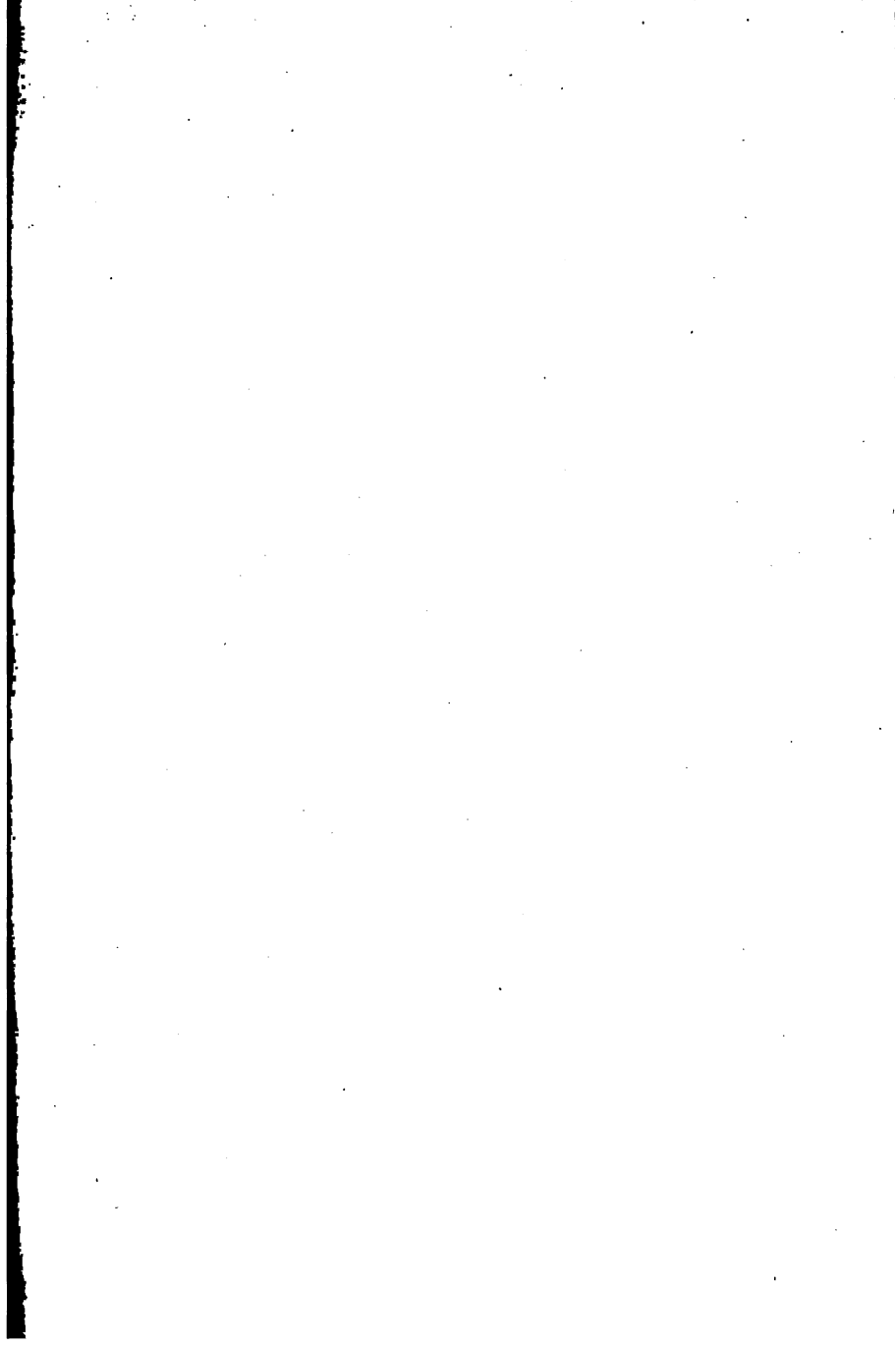












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